

Submission to the Universal Periodic  
Review of the United Nations Human  
Rights Council

4<sup>th</sup> Cycle – 41<sup>st</sup> Session

## Country Review: United Kingdom

March 2022  
by Kate Ryan

**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 and focused on raising awareness and minimizing human rights violations in the educational field.

Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support the following activities/projects: removing obstacles in education; contributing to the achievement of peace and tranquility in the society through adaptation studies in an environment of intercultural tolerance; preventing radicalism and polarization; and eliminating the opportunity gap in education for all. Our goal is to work together with global partners to remove barriers to access to education and to take concrete steps to ensure universal access to education.



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## 0. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 and is focused on raising awareness and minimising human rights violations in the educational field.
2. Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support the following activities/projects: removing obstacles in education; contributing to the achievement of peace and tranquillity in the society through adaptation studies in an environment of intercultural tolerance; preventing radicalism and polarisation; and eliminating the opportunity gap in education for all. Our goal is to work together with global partners to remove barriers to access to education and to take concrete steps to ensure universal access to education.
3. Providing education is one of the most important functions of any government and while many countries' educational systems face greater troubles than the UK's, it is by no means without its flaws.
4. There are five stages that encompass the education system in the UK: early years, primary, secondary, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 (4 in Northern Ireland) and 16. Further Education is not compulsory and covers non-advanced education held at education colleges and HE institutions. The fifth stage, HE, is further study that takes place in universities and other Higher Education Institutions. This article will discuss some of the main problems the UK is facing including its two-tiered education system, major class divide and lack of resources and money in disadvantaged schools.

## 1. Class Divide

5. In the United Kingdom, a student's university prospects and even whether they attend at all is hinged heavily upon their socioeconomic background, the school they attended and their geographical location. The countries 'Top' universities are highly socially selective, with studies showing that students from wealthier backgrounds and private schools are considerably more likely to gain a place in top institutions which are year after year at the top of league tables, and which go on to open doors in the job market. In the year before the pandemic, the Sutton Trust found that independent school pupils were seven times more likely to be accepted to Oxbridge than those in non-selective state schools and more than twice as likely to be accepted to Russell Group Universities. The Sutton Trust found that "Schools with similar exam results had very different rates of progression to top universities, and especially to Oxbridge. Almost a quarter (23%) of students in independent schools in the top fifth of all schools for exam results applied to Oxbridge, but only 11% of students in comprehensives in the same high achieving group of schools did so. Of those who applied to Oxbridge from schools in the top fifth, 35% were successful from independent schools, but only 28% of those applying from comprehensives were accepted". The class divide became even more apparent during the recent years of the pandemic as it was shown that nearly two-thirds of private schools had already well-established platforms for e-learning in place before the national

lockdowns compared to their less funded state schools with just a quarter of them having e-learning platforms pre-pandemic.

## II. Wealth Divide

6. Money and a lack of it is a major problem facing the UK educational system. The lack of school funding means that the onus is often put on parents to pick up the slack. Now that many schools can't afford to supply things like free after-school activities and free lunch, the burden falls on the parents. This means that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds aren't going to get as good an education as their wealthier peers. This funding issue extends across all education levels as year after year it is found that to the UK is one of the most expensive places in the world to attend university and obtain a degree, and the wealth divide in education is becoming more apparent across all stages of education.

## III. Recommendations

7. Broken Chalk recommends to United Kingdom government to give addition funds to the school to reduce the gap between lower socio-economic backgrounds students and their wealthier peers.
8. Broken Chalk recommends to United Kingdom government to give more chance to the students with lower socio-economic backgrounds for them to gain admissions in to the universities.
9. Broken Chalk recommends to United Kingdom government to support public schools to improve their e-learning platforms.

## IV. Sources

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