

Recognising and responding to racism and racial stereotyping

In school racism occurs when a pupil, or teacher, is treated less favorably because of their skin colour, nationality, religion or belief, or culture group.

Racially discriminatory behaviour ranges from verbal abuse, online bullying, physical attacks and exclusion from activities. SRtRC research discovered 1/3 of teachers did not feel confident recognising racism in the classroom and nearly 4/5 did not feel confident when responding to pupils subjected to racism or perpetrators of racial discrimination. This fact sheet provides help for teachers to be able to recognise and respond to racist behaviour. All examples provided have occurred in Welsh schools in 2016.

What does racism look like in school?

- ✓ Name calling, insults and racist jokes *e.g. A Y9 pupil shouting Allahu Akbar then throwing their bag into the corridor.*
- ✓ Refusal to co-operate with pupils because of ethnic origin *e.g. A white Y4 child telling a black pupil they can't play as they have dirty skin.*
- ✓ Provocative behaviour such as the wearing of badges or crests. *e.g. A Y7 student continuously drawing swastikas on their hand after they have been educated about why that is not appropriate.*
- ✓ Ridicule of a pupil for religious or cultural differences, *e.g. A Y8 Sikh pupil having their turban pulled off.*
- ✓ Racist comments unrelated to a subject matter in the course of discussion in lessons *e.g. A Y5 pupil shouting 'kill all Muslims' when learning about African poets.*
- ✓ Incitement to others to behave in a racist way. *e.g. A Y7 child getting two other friends to approach pupils with Eastern European heritage and tell them they should go back to where they come from.*
- ✓ Physical assault or verbal abuse and threat. *e.g. A Y9 targeting pupils with Asian heritage calling them 'Pakis' 'Terrorists' whilst physically intimidating them.*

What if they didn't know what they were saying?

Any racially discriminatory behaviour or racial stereotyping is not appropriate in school, even when a child tells you it was just banter or a joke, even when a pupil you think may have been victimised tells you it was banter. The definition of racist incidents is "**any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.**" If you allow one or two pupils to joke about racial stereotypes you are effectively normalising discriminatory behaviour. Whilst those pupils may not think anything of a comment, another student or a future pupil they talk to might feel discriminated against. The intent behind language and actions doesn't necessarily alter the effect words and behaviour can have. By ignoring or dismissing discriminatory behaviour, or racial stereotyping, you are setting the precedent that it is ok to treat somebody less favourably because of their skin colour, nationality, religion or belief, or their culture group. You are also telling the suspected victim that it is acceptable to receive racial discrimination.

How should I respond?

Perpetrator	Victim	Bystander
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explain clearly and calmly why the behaviour was wrong. ✓ Avoid shaming the behaviour; some pupils may not be aware that it was unacceptable. ✓ Seek assurance that the pupil(s) understands wrong doing. ✓ Obtain an apology. ✓ Inform class and head teacher both in writing and verbally (maintain a record of this) for them to report to the Local Authority. ✓ If the perpetrator intended to hurt the victim then follow the School's Behaviour Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Confirm clearly and calmly why behaviour was wrong. ✓ Reassure and offer the opportunity to talk about it and their feelings. This may be at a later stage as victims of racial abuse are sometimes reluctant to talk about the experience at the time but may talk about it later. ✓ Encourage the victim to report any future incidents. ✓ Inform class and head teacher both in writing and verbally (maintain a record of this) and explain how incident has been dealt with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make sure anyone listening or overhearing the incident knows the words and actions were wrong and unacceptable.

How do I effectively challenge pupils?

It is better to challenge a pupil rather than indirectly handle the situation by giving it to someone else to do, or, completely withdraw from a tricky conversation. Some tips include rephrasing, open questioning and providing counter narratives or parallels to increase understanding or empathy. Below is an example of how to challenge a pupil who has racially stereotyped someone, in this case a Czech person.

Pupil comments	Teacher's response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>This Czech stole my bike at the weekend!</i> 2. <i>Yeah, it was new as well!</i> 3. <i>No.</i> 4. <i>My Dad told me!</i> 5. <i>Well, no.</i> 6. <i>I don't actually know.</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>A Czech person stole your bike?!</i> 2. <i>That's sad; did you see the person who stole it?</i> 3. <i>That's interesting, how did you know who did it?</i> 4. <i>Oh, so your Dad saw who did it?</i> 5. <i>How did you know where the person was from?</i> 6. <i>Interesting, so maybe a Czech person did not steal your bike.</i>