



OFG
Education

Anti Racist Best Practice Guidance

Developing Anti-Racist Practice in Schools:
A Co-Produced Guide to Prevention, Response and Belonging

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed as part of a wider anti-racism project, following concerns and learning identified across schools where racism-related incidents had occurred. Rather than producing guidance in isolation, we began by listening to the schools most directly impacted, using structured listening groups to understand what had happened, what staff and pupils needed, where confidence was strong, and where further support, clarity or consistency was required.

These listening groups were central to the development of this work. They enabled Headteachers, Senior Leaders, Designated Safeguarding Leads, pastoral teams, teaching staff, and other school-based professionals to share their experiences, reflect on the impact of racism within their communities, and identify what would make guidance practically useful in day-to-day school life. The process was supported by colleagues with expertise in safeguarding, behaviour, attitudes and culture, training, clinical services, inclusion, and wellbeing.

The guidance is therefore co-produced and grounded in real school experience. The themes, principles, scripts and practical steps included here have been shaped by what schools told us would help them prevent racism more effectively, respond with greater confidence when incidents occur, support those affected, and ensure that learning leads to meaningful cultural change.

We recognise that anti-racism is not a single policy, training session or response to an incident. It is an ongoing commitment to listening, learning, reflection and action. This guide forms part of our wider work to build school communities where every child, young person, member of staff, family and visitor feels safe, respected, valued and able to belong. Through co-production, honest reflection and continuous improvement, we aim to create cultures where racism is actively challenged, diversity is represented and celebrated, and everyone can thrive free from discrimination or prejudice.

2.0 RESEARCH AND LEGAL CONTEXT

This guidance is informed by current legislation, safeguarding expectations and research relating to racism, discrimination, belonging, wellbeing, school connectedness and inclusive whole-school culture. It is intended to support schools to meet their legal and moral responsibilities while also providing practical, relational and trauma-informed guidance for everyday practice.



Under the Equality Act 2010, race is a protected characteristic. The Act came into force in October 2010 and provides legal protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in education, employment and wider society. Schools must not unlawfully discriminate, harass or victimise pupils, staff or members of the wider school community because of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin or national origin. Schools are also expected to take appropriate action when racism occurs, including where incidents involve racist language, behaviour, bullying, harassment or exclusionary practice.

The Public Sector Equality Duty, introduced through section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and in force from April 2011, requires schools to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This means that anti-racism should not only be reactive following incidents, but should be embedded in leadership, curriculum, staff development, recording systems, pupil voice, family engagement and school improvement planning.

Schools also have safeguarding responsibilities. Keeping Children Safe in Education is statutory guidance first published in 2015 and updated annually, with schools currently required to follow the 2025 version until 31 August 2026. It sets out the importance of creating environments where children are safe, listened to, supported and protected from harm. Racism, racist bullying, discriminatory language and prejudice-based incidents can affect a child's sense of safety and belonging and should therefore be understood as both behaviour and safeguarding concerns where there is evidence of harm, vulnerability, repeated targeting, online abuse, coercion, escalation, extremist ideology, radicalisation concerns, harmful online influences or wider discriminatory patterns.

Research highlights that experiences of racism, prejudice and social exclusion can negatively affect emotional wellbeing, mental health, self-esteem, attendance, engagement and educational outcomes. Recent UK evidence has identified racism as a contributor to poorer mental health outcomes for children and young people, while also noting that the evidence base remains under-developed and that schools need to listen carefully to lived experience (Ghezze et al., 2025). The UK Trauma Council similarly describes racism and race-based stress as experiences that can be harmful to children's development, wellbeing and sense of safety (UK Trauma Council, 2021). Conversely, school environments that promote belonging, representation, positive relationships, pupil voice and meaningful dialogue are associated with stronger engagement, wellbeing and achievement. Anti-racist practice is therefore not only about responding to individual incidents; it is also about creating the conditions in which all pupils and staff can feel psychologically safe, valued and able to participate fully in school life.

This guidance promotes a whole-school anti-racist approach that combines prevention, clear boundaries, support for those harmed, education, accountability, repair and review. It recognises that racist behaviour must be addressed consistently, while also ensuring that responses are developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, relational and focused on learning and long-term cultural change.

3.0 PURPOSE

Everyone has the right to feel safe, respected, valued and able to belong within our schools. This includes every individual attending, working in, visiting or connected to our school and wider school community.

Racism can have a significant impact on emotional wellbeing, relationships, engagement, attendance, and educational outcomes. This guidance provides a clear framework for preventing racism, responding effectively when incidents occur, supporting those affected, and promoting learning and accountability.

Whilst pupils may have SEND, SEMH needs, communication differences, or trauma histories, these factors help us understand behaviour but do not excuse racist behaviour or reduce its impact on others.

This guidance should be read alongside the Equality Act 2010, Keeping Children Safe in Education, the school's behaviour policy, safeguarding procedures, staff code of conduct, and relevant inclusion and equality policies.



For the purposes of this guidance, a racist incident is any incident perceived to be racist by the person affected or by any other person. This may include language, behaviour, symbols, jokes, online activity, exclusion, stereotyping or assumptions linked to race, ethnicity, nationality, culture or heritage.

4.0 KEY PRINCIPLES

- Racism is always addressed
- Safety comes first
- The impact on the individual is prioritised
- Education and accountability work together
- Responses are trauma-informed and relational
- Lived experience and community voice matter
- Everyone shares responsibility for creating an inclusive culture

5.0 SECTION 1: PREVENTION

Creating an Anti-Racist School Culture

Preventing racism is everyone's responsibility and should be embedded throughout school life rather than only being addressed following incidents.

What this looks like in practice:

- Diversity is embedded across the curriculum and wider school life, from Early Years onwards.
- Clear behaviour expectations
- Inclusive curriculum content.
- Celebration of diversity.
- Consistent staff responses.
- Opportunities for pupil voice.
- Strong family and community engagement.

Staff Training and Development

All staff should receive ongoing training to ensure they feel confident responding to incidents of racism appropriately.

Training should include:

- Understanding different forms of racism.
- Impact versus intent.
- Trauma-informed approaches.
- Responding using restorative and relational approaches.
- How to support those affected.
- How to record and report incidents.

SHINE Training

Schools should actively utilise SHINE training opportunities, including resources and sessions that incorporate lived experience. This should include all team members completing workplace conduct and professional boundaries mandatory training.

Curriculum and Learning

Anti-racist education should be embedded within PSHE, citizenship, assemblies, tutor time and wider curriculum opportunities.



Resources should be age appropriate, developmentally appropriate, accessible for SEND learners and adapted to communication needs.

Schools should make use of the PSHE Support Pack in Appendix 1, alongside resources available through the RSHE Network and other trusted providers.

Working with Families and Communities

Creating an anti-racist culture extends beyond the school gates. Schools should work collaboratively with parents, carers, community organisations, cultural groups and external agencies. This could include new pupils' induction to school, workshops, parent surveys, website and newsletter updates, coffee mornings, and inviting local community members into school to support the embedding of different cultures through art, cooking, storytelling, music and other creative activities.

External Support

Examples include Show Racism the Red Card, Youth Justice Services, Youth Offending Teams and community organisations that can provide workshops, educational resources, awareness programmes and targeted interventions. Youth Justice Services may be particularly helpful as a preventative partner where there are repeated incidents, concerns about group offending, harmful peer dynamics, or where targeted intervention could help prevent escalation.

Racism may also occur online, including through messages, images, social media, gaming platforms or group chats. Online racism should be responded to with the same seriousness as incidents occurring in school, with consideration given to safeguarding, peer relationships, family communication and wider patterns of harm.

Where racist behaviours appear linked to extremist ideologies, radicalisation concerns, conspiracy narratives or harmful online influences, staff should follow safeguarding procedures and consider whether Prevent advice or referral is required in line with local arrangements.

6.0 SECTION 2: RESPONDING TO RACISM

Recording all incidents of racism is important to support compliance with the Equality Act 2010, identify patterns, evaluate interventions, and inform preventative strategies across the school community.

Step 1: Recognise and Stop the Behaviour

As soon as racist language, behaviour, gestures, symbols, or discriminatory actions are observed or reported, staff should intervene. The response should be calm, confident, and unambiguous. It is important that all staff consistently communicate that racism is unacceptable whilst avoiding language that humiliates or shames the pupil involved.

The aim at this stage is not to investigate, debate, or apply consequences. The immediate focus is stopping harm and setting a clear boundary.

If the racism is directed towards a specific individual

Where racist language or behaviour has been targeted at a pupil, member of staff, parent, carer, or visitor, staff should make it clear that the behaviour is unacceptable and will be addressed.

Suggested script:

"I'm going to stop you there. That language is racist and is not acceptable within our school. Everyone has the right to feel safe and respected."



"We are going to deal with this, but right now I need the behaviour to stop."

"We can help you with whatever is making you upset or angry, but we cannot allow language that hurts or discriminates against others."

"I understand there may be a reason you are feeling this way, but racism is never an acceptable way to express those feelings."

If racist language appears to have been used without understanding

Some pupils may repeat words or phrases they have heard elsewhere without fully understanding their meaning or impact. Whilst this should influence the educational response later, the language should still be challenged immediately.

Suggested script:

"I'm going to pause you there. That word isn't appropriate and can cause harm. Let's talk about what that means and why we don't use language like that."

"You may not have understood the impact of that word, but it can be very hurtful to other people."

"It is important that we understand the meaning of the words we use."

"Part of our job is helping you learn which words are respectful and which words can cause harm."

Things to Avoid

When responding in the moment, staff should avoid:

- Arguing or debating whether the behaviour was racist.
- Asking the person harmed to explain why the behaviour was offensive.
- Publicly shaming the pupil responsible.
- Minimising the incident.
- Statements such as:
 - "They didn't mean it."
 - "That's just how they talk."
 - "They're only joking."
 - "It's because of their diagnosis."
- Lengthy discussions whilst emotions are heightened.

These responses can unintentionally invalidate the experience of the person harmed and reduce opportunities for meaningful learning later.

Step 2: Prioritise the Person Harmed

Once the behaviour has been stopped, attention should turn to the individual who has experienced racism. The person affected may feel upset, shocked, embarrassed, angry, anxious, withdrawn, or unsure how to respond. Some individuals may want to talk immediately, whilst others may prefer time and space. Staff should avoid assumptions and provide support based on the individual needs of the person involved.

Immediate actions

Staff should:



- Check on the individual's emotional wellbeing.
- Provide reassurance and emotional containment.
- Reduce further exposure to harm.
- Offer access to a trusted adult.
- Create space away from the incident if needed.
- Listen without judgement.
- Reassure them that the incident will be taken seriously.

Suggested script

*"I'm sorry that happened."
"You didn't deserve that."
"Thank you for telling us."
"We're going to take this seriously."
"What can we do to help you feel safe right now?"*

Additional considerations

Where appropriate, consider:

- Whether the pupil requires time away from the classroom.
- Whether pupils with additional needs may show stress or anxiety in more subtle or less visible ways.
- Whether a family member should be informed immediately.
- Whether pastoral or therapeutic support is required.
- Whether additional support should be offered over the following days and weeks.

The impact of racism can continue long after the incident itself has ended, so support should not stop once the immediate situation has been resolved.

Step 3: Regulate the Situation

Once the behaviour has been addressed and the person harmed has been supported, staff should focus on reducing escalation and restoring a sense of safety.

In many cases, emotions may be heightened for everyone involved. Attempting to conduct investigations, restorative conversations, or detailed discussions too early can increase distress and reduce the effectiveness of later interventions.

Staff should:

- Use a calm, regulated tone of voice.
- Reduce the audience wherever possible.
- Separate individuals if necessary.
- Allow time for emotional regulation.
- Ensure staff and pupils feel safe.
- Follow individual support plans where relevant.

Helpful responses

"I'm not going to discuss everything right now whilst people are upset. We'll come back to this once everyone is calm."

"Let's take some time and space before we talk about what happened."

"Right now our priority is making sure everyone is safe and supported."



Before leaving the immediate response stage, staff should ensure:

- The behaviour has stopped.
- The person harmed feels safe and supported.
- Any immediate risks have been managed.
- Relevant leaders have been informed.
- Arrangements have been made for follow-up conversations and support.

The purpose of the immediate response is not to fully resolve the incident. It is to stop harm, communicate clear expectations, support those affected, and create the conditions for meaningful learning, accountability, and repair during the follow-up process.

7.0 SECTION 3: AFTER THE INCIDENT

Supporting the Individual Who Experienced Racism

The impact of racism can continue long after the incident itself has ended. Some individuals may appear unaffected initially but experience distress later. Schools should ensure support is available both immediately and over time.

Support may include pastoral support, therapeutic support, clinical services where appropriate, access to a trusted adult, wellbeing check-ins, and opportunities to talk about what happened if and when the individual feels ready. Staff should seek to provide reassurance, restore a sense of safety, and ensure the individual knows that their concerns have been heard and taken seriously.

Suggested questions:

"What would help you feel safe right now?"
"Is there someone you would like support from?"
"Would you like to talk about what happened now or later?"

Supporting Staff

Racism directed towards staff should never be viewed as "part of the job". Schools have a duty to support staff wellbeing and ensure incidents are responded to appropriately.

Leaders should acknowledge the harm caused, offer practical and emotional support, and provide opportunities for debriefing and reflection. Staff should know what action is being taken and who to contact if further support is required.

Suggested Leadership Response:

"That should not have happened. We are taking this seriously. What support would be helpful right now?"

Additional support may include:

- Time away from the situation if needed.
- Follow-up conversations with leaders.
- Access to mental health first aiders, wellbeing or employee support services.
- Participation in restorative approaches only if they wish to do so.



8.0 SECTION 4: RECORDING AND REPORTING

All incidents of racism should be recorded using the appropriate prejudice-related incident category and in line with school procedures.

Accurate recording helps ensure accountability, identifies patterns and trends, and supports schools in evaluating the effectiveness of their response.

Records should include:

- What happened
- Who was affected
- The impact
- Actions taken

Reporting and Escalation

Schools should ensure relevant leaders are informed of all incidents of racism. Consideration should also be given to whether additional safeguarding concerns are present, particularly where incidents are repeated, targeted, severe, involve online harm, or form part of a wider pattern of discriminatory behaviour.

Staff should also consider contextual safeguarding factors, including whether racist behaviour is being influenced by peer groups, family attitudes, community tensions, online content, social media, gaming platforms, group chats or wider harmful narratives. This does not excuse the behaviour, but it may help staff understand risk, plan support and identify whether wider intervention is needed.

Children's Social Care or wider safeguarding referrals should be considered where incidents raise concerns about a child's welfare, safety or vulnerability. This may include repeated or escalating racist behaviour, evidence of coercion or exploitation, significant emotional harm, harmful family or peer influence, threats, violence, online radicalising content, or concerns that the child is experiencing or causing harm beyond the school context.

For more serious incidents, schools should consider whether advice or involvement from the Police, including local Hate Crime Officers where available, is appropriate. This may be relevant where incidents include threats, assault, harassment, criminal damage, malicious communications, hate crime indicators, or other behaviour that may constitute a criminal offence.

Clinical services may also have an important role in supporting anti-racist practice. This may include individual support where communication needs, sensory differences, emotional regulation difficulties, trauma histories, neurodivergence or mental health needs may be contributing factors; support for those impacted by racism; and whole-school or staff-level consultation to strengthen understanding, prevention, responses and repair. These factors should support assessment and intervention planning, while remaining clear that racist language or behaviour still needs to be addressed.

Parents and carers should be informed in a timely and sensitive manner, with clear information provided regarding actions taken and support available.

Communication with parents and carers should be factual, sensitive and clear. Schools should avoid minimising the incident, explain what support has been offered, outline next steps where appropriate, and ensure families know who they can contact if they have further concerns.

Leadership Oversight



Leaders should regularly review incidents of racism to ensure:

- Appropriate recording has taken place.
- Individuals affected have received support.
- Follow-up actions have been completed.
- Patterns and trends are identified.
- Learning is shared across the school.
- Workplace conduct and professional boundaries mandatory training is regularly revisited in line with the code of conduct and is embedded in school culture.

Leaders should use incident data to fulfil their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty and to inform school improvement planning, staff development, and wider inclusion strategies.

Leaders should challenge any practice that minimises, dismisses, or normalises racism and ensure all staff feel confident responding to incidents appropriately.

9.0 SECTION 5: EDUCATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPAIR

Following an incident, schools should focus on helping the individual understand the impact of their behaviour, take responsibility for their actions, and develop alternative ways of expressing themselves in the future.

The aim is not simply to impose a consequence, but to promote learning, reflection, empathy, and behavioural change.

Discussions should explore:

- What happened?
- What was the pupil thinking or feeling at the time?
- What did they understand about the language or behaviour used?
- Who was affected and how?
- What could be done differently next time?
- What support is needed to prevent a recurrence?

The response should balance support with accountability, helping pupils understand that whilst emotions are valid, racist language and behaviour are not acceptable ways of expressing them.

Some individuals may experience racism alongside other forms of discrimination or vulnerability, including disability, religion, language, gender, care experience or socioeconomic disadvantage. Responses should take account of the whole child or adult and the wider context of their experience.

Restorative Approaches

Restorative approaches may support repair and relationship building where appropriate.

These approaches should only be considered where:

- The individual harmed feels safe.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Appropriate preparation has taken place.
- Staff believe the process is likely to be beneficial.



No individual should ever feel pressured to:

- Accept an apology.
- Forgive.
- Educate the other person.
- Participate in a restorative meeting.

10.0 SECTION 6: LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Research suggests that whole-school approaches that promote belonging, positive relationships, representation, and opportunities for meaningful discussion are more effective than isolated responses to individual incidents. The Education Endowment Foundation highlights that pupils feeling seen, understood and safe is an important foundation for attendance and engagement (Education Endowment Foundation, 2024). Preventative work should therefore be embedded within school culture, curriculum planning, policy development and staff training.

Every incident provides an opportunity for reflection and improvement.

Following incidents, leaders and staff should consider whether there were opportunities to intervene earlier, whether existing support plans were effective, and whether additional preventative strategies may be required.

Schools should regularly review:

- Incident trends and patterns.
- Repeat incidents.
- Hotspots within the school.
- Curriculum opportunities.
- Training needs.
- The effectiveness of interventions and support plans.
- Whether safeguarding, Prevent, Youth Justice Service, Police, clinical or wider specialist advice is required to support those impacted, reduce risk, strengthen prevention and prevent escalation.

Data should be used not only to monitor incidents but also to inform preventative work, curriculum planning, staff training, and school improvement priorities.

11.0 SECTION 7: CO-PRODUCTION

Effective anti-racist practice is developed with people, not for people.

Pupils, staff, families, and communities should be given meaningful opportunities to contribute to school culture, policy development, curriculum design, and improvement activities.

Schools should actively seek feedback and lived experience to help shape their approach to inclusion, belonging, and anti-racist practice.

Examples may include:

- Pupil voice groups.
- Focus groups and surveys.
- Family consultation events.
- Co-production workshops.



- Community partnership projects.
- Staff networks and forums.

By involving those with lived experience, schools can develop approaches that are meaningful, relevant, and responsive to the needs of their communities.

Community Partnerships

Schools should actively seek opportunities to work alongside families, community groups, charities, and external agencies to strengthen anti-racist practice.

Examples may include:

- Show Racism the Red Card.
- Unbottled.
- Local community and cultural organisations.
- Youth Justice Services or Youth Offending Teams, particularly where repeated incidents, group offending concerns or targeted preventative intervention may be relevant.
- Police or local Hate Crime Officers for more serious incidents that may constitute a criminal offence.
- Prevent partners where concerns relate to extremist ideology, radicalisation or harmful online influences.
- Clinical services and specialist therapeutic or communication support, including individual formulation and intervention planning, support for those impacted, and whole-school or staff-level consultation where emotional regulation, communication needs, neurodivergence, trauma or mental health needs may be relevant.
- Equality and diversity specialists.
- SHINE lived-experience training opportunities.

Community partnerships can provide valuable perspectives, additional support, and opportunities for education that reflect the lived experiences of those within and beyond the school community.

Schools should identify who is responsible for oversight of anti-racist practice, how incidents and themes will be reviewed, and how learning will be shared through safeguarding, behaviour, culture and governance routes. This helps ensure that anti-racism remains active, reviewed and embedded rather than becoming a one-off response to individual incidents.

12.0 KEY MESSAGE FOR STAFF

You are not expected to have all the answers.

You are expected to act.

If racism occurs:

- Address it.
- Support the person affected.
- Record it accurately.
- Seek support when needed.
- Ensure learning follows.

A consistent response from adults helps create a culture where everyone feels safe, respected, valued, and able to belong.



13.0 QUICK REFERENCE

STOP – Challenge the behaviour immediately.

SUPPORT – Prioritise the person affected.

REGULATE – Reduce escalation and create safety.

RECORD – Record accurately on Sleuth.

REPORT – Inform appropriate leaders and parents/carers.

EDUCATE – Support understanding and accountability, including use of the PSHE Support Pack in Appendix 1 where appropriate.

REPAIR – Use restorative approaches where appropriate.

REVIEW – Learn from the incident.

CO-PRODUCE – Use pupil, staff, family and community voice to improve practice.

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14.0 APPENDIX 1: PSHE SUPPORT PACK

This pack is intended to support schools to embed anti-racist education within PSHE, tutor time, assemblies and wider curriculum opportunities. It should be used alongside this guidance to support prevention, reflection, pupil voice, learning after incidents, and wider work on belonging, respect and inclusion.

Schools should adapt the activities and resources to meet the age, developmental stage, communication needs and lived experiences of their pupils. Materials should be delivered with care, ensuring that no pupil is expected to represent, explain or educate others about racism because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, culture or heritage.



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