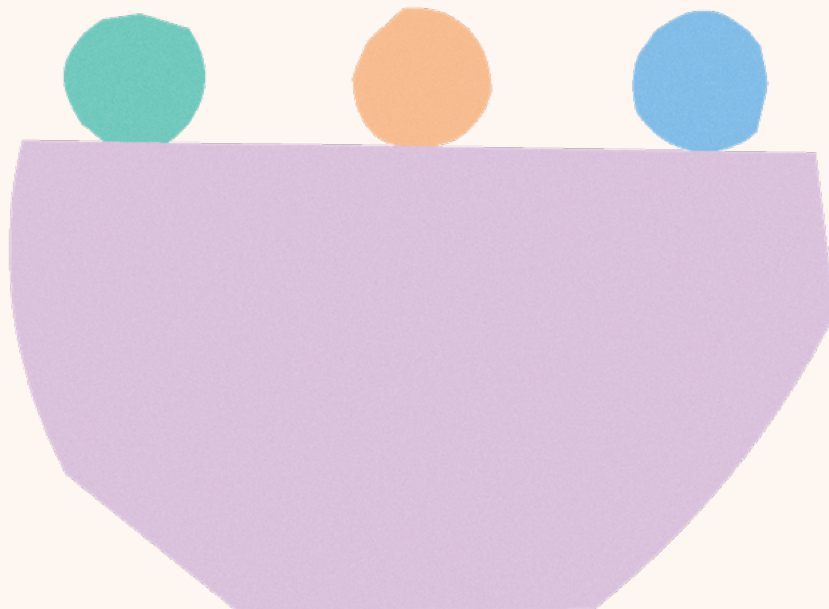


# Supporting students who have experienced racism



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## Introduction

Children and young people can experience racism in many different forms. It can include verbal abuse and name-calling; racist comments during a discussion or encouraging others to behave in a racist way. Sometimes racism can include damage to property, physical intimidation or violent attacks.

In other incidents, children and young people may be ridiculed because of cultural differences like food, dress or language, or they may be excluded from activities. Racist incidents can include the distribution of racist material, racist jokes and cyberbullying.



Racism can also take the form of **microaggressions**. Find out more about microaggressions in our [presentation resource](#).

As well as facing racism from their peers, some young people may experience racism from adults, as well as dealing with structural or systemic racism.

Mind's 'Not making the grade' report found that over half of those from Black and Black British backgrounds (55%) and mixed ethnic backgrounds (57%) had experienced racism at school, as had over a third (36%) of young people from Asian or Asian British backgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

“ If people believe they won't be racially targeted at school, then the anxiety and other mental health issues will lessen. - Student<sup>2</sup> ”

<sup>1</sup>Mind. Not making the grade: why our approach to mental health at secondary school is failing young people. 2021. <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/8852/not-making-the-grade.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>All quotes in this resource come from the Anna Freud Centre's survey on racism and mental health. A total of 796 respondents aged 13 to 20 completed the survey between 23rd September and 11th October 2021.

## What is the impact of experiencing racism?

Research has found links between experiencing racism and a detrimental impact to mental health.

Mind's 2021 report found that 70% of young people who had experienced racism at school said it had negatively impacted their mental health.<sup>3</sup>

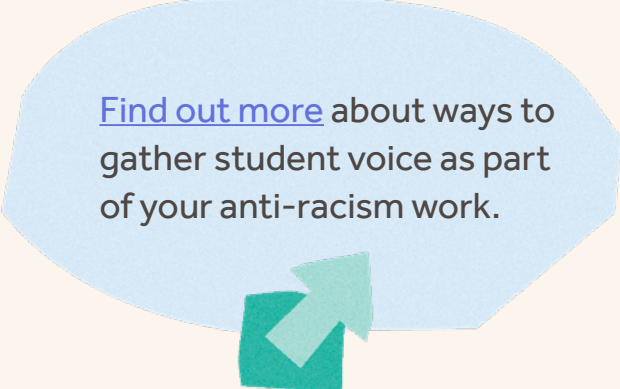
One literature review<sup>4</sup> found that exposure to discrimination predicted worse mental health (for example, anxiety and depression symptoms) in 76% of the links examined.

## Is it happening in my school?

Just because students haven't reported racist incidents doesn't mean it isn't happening.

All schools have a statutory responsibility under the [Equality Act 2010](#) to ensure that students with one or more protected characteristic are not put at a disadvantage in any part of school life. Schools also have a responsibility to prevent the impairment of children's mental health or development, as defined in the statutory guidance, [Keeping children safe in education 2021](#).

To achieve this, all schools should have a clear structure and process for reporting racist incidents, and must create one if they do not. It is important to create opportunities to hear students' voices and to have a clear framework for reporting racist incidents.



[Find out more](#) about ways to gather student voice as part of your anti-racism work.

<sup>3</sup>Mind. *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Williams, D. Stress and the Mental Health of Populations of Color: Advancing Our Understanding of Race-related Stressors. 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6532404/>

## What can I do to support a student who has experienced a racist incident?

### Listen

- Actively listen to the student's experience by asking lots of questions and repeating back what they've told you to make sure you have understood.
- Take care not to minimise, trivialise or deny their concerns or feelings.
- Try not to anticipate or assume you know what they are going to tell you. Make time to listen, understand and empathise before you respond.
- Avoid making comparisons between this incident and your own personal experiences.
- Thank the student for sharing the details of the incident with you. Acknowledge that it has been difficult for them. Tell them what you are going to do.

### Act

- Ensure that the student who has experienced racism has access to appropriate ongoing support, whether personal (friends or family) and/or professional support (e.g. school counsellor).
- Agree and implement the appropriate sanctions for the perpetrator of the racist incident.
- When dealing with the perpetrator of the racist incident, take time to explain not just what sanctions they will face but why what they said or did was wrong.
- Ensure that the student who has experienced racism feels that they received a satisfactory outcome and that they have been given the care and support they need.

### Record and review

- Make notes or create a record of the incident in accordance with your school's racist incident reporting system.
- Regularly review recorded incidents, look for patterns and discuss outcomes. Share anonymised accounts with other stakeholders and develop your whole-school approach.

## What more can schools do to challenge racism?

Let students know that they can speak to a teacher in a completely non-judgemental/unbiased manner when they feel uncomfortable about something that has been said or happened.

- Student

- Adopt a whole-school approach to educating about race and racism.
- Create a whole-school culture that celebrates diversity and champions inclusion.
- Establish a racist incident reporting system. Make sure that staff and students know about it and keep records of incidents.
- Review existing school policies and identify those that may be discriminatory or that could be better used to challenge racism. Use [our resource on reviewing policies](#) to help you do this.
- Work with staff, students, parents and carers to draft and agree an anti-racism policy that works for your school. Use [our anti-racism policy resource](#) to help you do this.
- Set up a working group to look at diversifying the curriculum taught in your school. [Read a case study](#) from a school that has successfully done this.
- Provide training for staff that allows them to become aware of their own attitudes and prejudices and to understand the limitations of their own perspectives.
- Ensure that you are effectively supporting the wellbeing of staff from racially minoritised groups. Learn more about how to do this in [our staff resource](#).
- Ask staff to challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. Make it clear that the school has a zero-tolerance policy towards racist, ethnic, religious or cultural jokes or slurs, or any actions that demean any person or group. Ensure that this policy is modelled by senior leadership in the school.

I think that things could greatly improve if there was a safe space for minorities to voice their opinions, and if teachers could structure the way they respond to racism around the feedback received.

- Student

## Further support for students

There are a number of organisations dedicated to supporting young people who have experienced racism. The organisations listed below are just some that we are aware of – there may be other organisations in your local area that you want to engage instead.

## Safeguarding/incident reporting

- **Stop Hate UK** - <https://www.stophateuk.org>
- **True Vision** - <https://www.report-it.org.uk/home>



## Free helplines/email services/chat services

- **Boloh** - <https://helpline.barnardos.org.uk> / 0800 151 2605
- **Muslim Youth Helpline** - <https://myh.org.uk> / 0808 808 2008
- **The Helpline** - <https://thehelpline.org.uk>
- **The Mix** - <https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team> / 0808 808 4994
- **Childline** - <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support> / 0800 1111

