

# Information for teachers about racist bullying

## As a teacher, you set the tone for what is acceptable in the classroom and school community.

Building a respectful and inclusive classroom environment is fundamental to preventing racist bullying. Actions that teachers can take include:

- Recognising we are all influenced by the different social, educational and organisational cultures in which we live and participate
- Supporting the development of effective and respectful communication and interactions between students
- Challenging discriminatory language, vilification stereotypes and behaviours
- Promoting connections between students through cooperative learning groups
- Incorporating [Aboriginal](#) history, identity and contemporary culture into teaching and learning
- Being mindful that a whole community cannot be represented by its individual members or historical figures
- Not expecting students to speak on behalf of their community
- Inviting guest speakers from a diverse range of communities
- Ensuring you are aware of the different needs your students might have (e.g. consider recipes used in TAS classes, don't schedule excursions during significant religious holidays)
- Providing accurate information about cultural and religious groups at your school and dispel false beliefs and stereotypes
- Being an [upstander](#) who calls out racist bullying when you see it and developing upstander skills in students.

## Practical steps to respond to racist bullying

The first step in responding to any form of bullying is to follow your school's bullying prevention plan. It is important that all staff are consistent in the messages they convey to students and the actions they take when addressing any type of bullying. It is also important that you take action to deal with incidents of racism yourself and report incidents of racist bullying to the appropriate school leader or to the school Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO).

The following steps may assist in instances when you need to address racist bullying immediately:

**Stay calm** - Avoid getting into conflict with the student/s engaged in racist bullying. This may inflame the situation, make the student/s defensive and prevent them from reflecting on the consequences of their behaviour.

**Get ready for action** - The behaviour needs to be addressed explicitly. Ignoring the behaviour and hoping that it will disappear sends a message that it is okay and often results in the behaviour escalating. Consider the best time to intervene. It may be that you need to intervene immediately and then follow up one on one with the student/s.

**Confront the behaviour** - Make it explicit to the student that the behaviour/language has been noted and must stop immediately.

**Talk to the student** - Guide the student to identify for themselves how what they said/did was racist bullying. Ask open ended questions that encourage the student to reflect on their actions. Seek further

support if you need it to manage dismissive or difficult students. The Stage Coordinator, Year Advisor or ARCO may be able to assist.

**Have the student consider the effects of racist bullying** - Once you have raised the student's awareness of what is unacceptable, have the student reflect on the effects of their behaviour. Ask how the comments/behaviours may make the other student feel, i.e. establish the impact of racist bullying on others. Remind the student that all members of the school community have the right to be treated with the same levels of respect by both teachers and students.

**Deal with the incident** in line with the school's discipline procedures.

**Check in with the affected student** - Make sure you check in with the student affected by the racist bullying and ensure they know you support them. Reassure them that the school doesn't tolerate any form of bullying. Seek the support of the ARCO.

**Record the incident** in line with your school procedures.

## How to support a student who is being racially bullied

- If a student comes to you and says they have been racially bullied, remember that the racist bullying they are experiencing may be very subtle and providing explicit examples may be difficult for them.
- Listen empathically and encourage the student to talk if they feel comfortable to. Ask the student how you can help, or what they think would make a difference.
- Reassure them that whatever they are feeling is normal and that together with their parents, friends and other school staff, the racist bullying will be addressed.
- Do not down play the seriousness of what the student is experiencing or how they are feeling. Racist bullying is not a normal part of growing up and it is not something to put up with or ignore.
- Tell them that the school has a policy to ensure everyone feels safe at school and racist bullying will not be tolerated.
- Encourage the student to tell their parents/carers.
- Do not promise to keep it secret. Even if the student doesn't want you to do anything just yet, you should monitor the situation and tell the appropriate school leader or ARCO as this may be part of a wider problem.
- Racist bullying compromises student resilience and wellbeing. In some cases, the support of a counsellor or external mental health service may be beneficial.
- Consult your school's bullying plan or talk with a colleague, senior member of staff or ARCO to determine the next steps to address the bullying.

## Teaching resources

Advice and resources are available to support schools in learning more about the cultural backgrounds of their students and in building culturally inclusive environments:

- The department has a range of curriculum resources available to assist teachers. See: [Anti-racism education](#) and [Cultural Inclusion](#).
- The department has support for teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. See: [Aboriginal Education in NSW Schools](#).
- The [SBS Cultural Atlas](#) provides factual information about Australia's migrant populations.

Acknowledgement: This document has been adapted from the Victorian Department of Education and Training document – [Information for teachers about racist bullying](#).