

Information for teachers about racist bullying

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

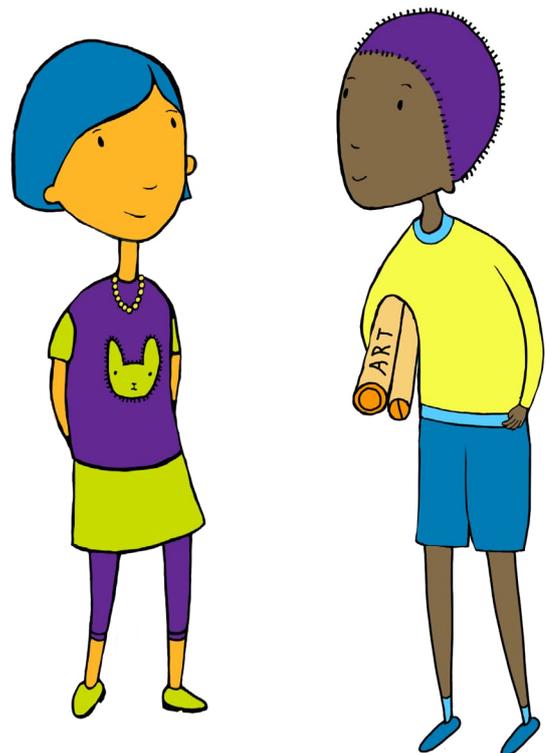
This information sheet provides practical steps for creating an inclusive classroom, steps you can take to respond to racist bullying and ways you can support students.

Practical steps to prevent racist bullying

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
- Developing effective cross-cultural relationships via good communication
- 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 one or two 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 Home Economics classes, don't schedule excursions during significant religious holidays)
- Providing accurate information about cultural and religious groups at your school to dispel false beliefs and stereotypes
- Being an upstander who calls out racist bullying when you see it and developing upstander skills in students.



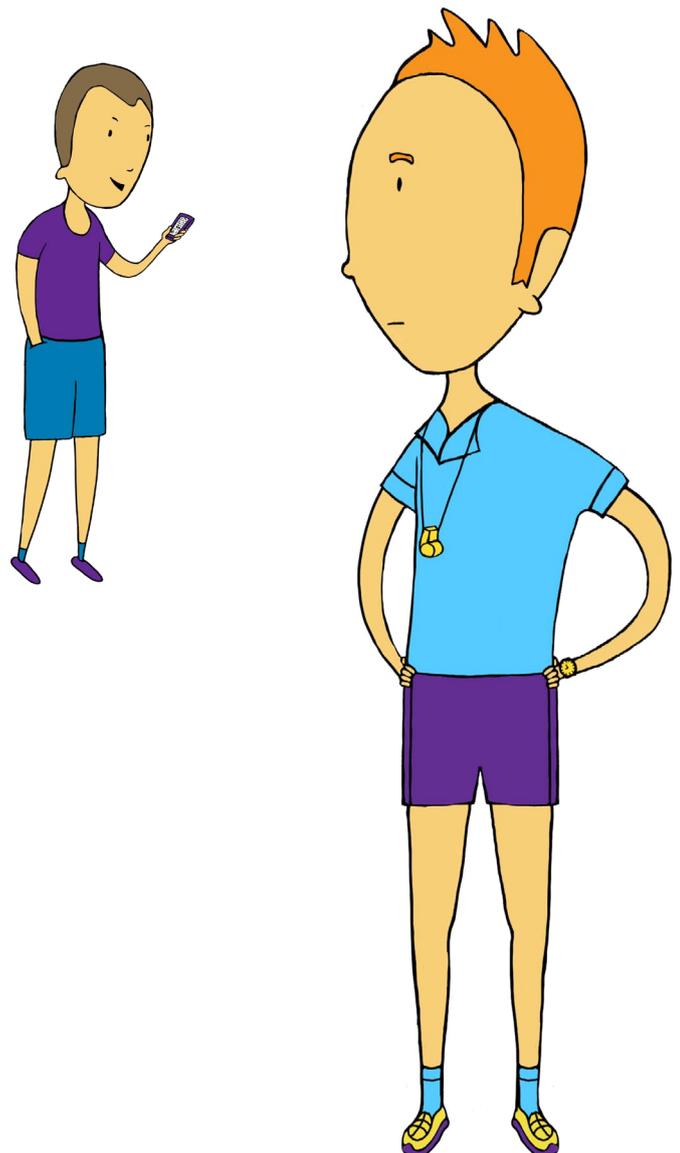
Practical steps to respond to racist bullying

The first step in responding to any form of bullying is to follow your school's bullying prevention policy. It is important that all staff are consistent in the messages they convey to students and the actions they take when addressing any bullying. It is also important that you report incidents of racist bullying to an appropriate school leader.

The following steps¹ may assist in instances when you need to address racist bullying immediately:

- **Stay calm** - Avoid getting into conflict with the student who has engaged in racist bullying. This may make the student defensive and not enable them to reflect 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 will often lead to escalation and sends a message that it is okay. 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 that what they said/did was racist bullying. Try to avoid telling them the answers by asking open ended questions that encourage the student to reflect on and articulate this for themselves. You may encounter students who are dismissive of your concerns. Seeking further support from someone like a Year Level Coordinator may be helpful.

- **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.
- **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.



¹ Source: : <https://iran.britishcouncil.org/en/teach/eod/classroom/racism>

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.
- Don't 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/carer.
- Don't promise to keep it secret. Even if the student doesn't want you to do anything just yet, you need to tell an appropriate school leader (e.g. the Year Level Coordinator) 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 policy or talk with a colleague or senior member of staff to determine the next steps to address the bullying.

Professional development

Centre for Multicultural Youth offers organisational training that can build the capacity of school staff to work with CALD young people and families. For more information, see [CMY](#).

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre schools program provides young people with the opportunity to have further insight into the issues people face when seeking asylum. See: [Asylum Seeker Resource Centre](#).

Teaching resources

A range of resources and guidance is available for supporting schools to learn about the cultural backgrounds of their students and build inclusive environments:

- The Victorian Curriculum includes content descriptors and elaborations for teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. See: [Learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures](#).
- For additional resources to support schools provide inclusive environments, and protocols for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture see: [Koorie teaching resources](#).
- The Department has a range of curriculum resources available to assist teachers to promote intercultural capability in their classrooms. See: [Intercultural capability](#).
- The SBS Cultural Atlas – provides factual information about Australia's migrant populations. See: [Cultural Atlas](#).