



Information for parents about racist bullying

Our schools are committed to ensuring students from all backgrounds feel safe and connected at school and are able to achieve their best.

This information sheet provides examples of what racist bullying can look like and practical steps you can take to work with your child's school to address it.

Racist bullying can be:

- Physical, verbal or emotional
- Online via mobile phones, email, social media and games
- Frequently making casual, offensive comments
- Making jokes that use racial and/or religious stereotypes
- Offensive graffiti
- Ridiculing, tormenting, threatening or making fun of physical attributes (such as skin colour, hair or facial features), customs, religion, food, accents, language, cultural or religious dress or music, or migration history
- Making comments that imply that a person is not "Australian"
- Refusing to socialise, work or co-operate with others because they are from a different cultural background
- Making judgements about a person's ability or values based on their accent, language or cultural background
- Religious abuse or vilification.

Racist bullying can have long-term negative effects on physical and mental health, as well as school attendance and educational outcomes¹.

Racist bullying can also negatively affect students who witness the bullying. Even if they are the friend of the bully, they can feel insecure and unprotected.



1 Vic Health (2014). [Racism and its links to young people's health factsheet](#)

Working with your child's school

Schools want all students to feel safe and included. Schools do not tolerate any form of bullying and take all forms of bullying seriously.

Schools must have a bullying prevention policy that states that any form of bullying is unacceptable. You should find the policy on the school website, or you can ask your child's teacher or the front office for a copy.

If your child experiences racist bullying, it is important that the school knows what is happening so they can support your child and address the bullying. Some steps you could take include:

- Making an appointment with your child's teacher or another relevant staff member. Your child's Year Level Coordinator or the Student Wellbeing Coordinator/Primary Welfare Officer are often good points of contact. You could also talk to an Assistant Principal.
- Asking the school to organise a professional interpreter for you if required.
- Bringing in a support person when meeting with the school.
- Explaining why you have asked for the meeting and ask for the school's commitment to ensure that the bullying stops.
- Sharing details of the incident/s your child has experienced and the impact it has had on them.
- Agreeing to a timeframe for the school to respond to the incident/s.
- Allowing the agreed amount of time after the meeting for the school to respond to the bullying. Often the staff investigating the report will need to talk to a range of people, including other staff and students. This may take some time and doesn't mean the school isn't taking your concern seriously.

- Helping your child work out what to do if the bullying happens again. This may involve a plan to tell a teacher or see someone from the Wellbeing team. You can also talk to them about how they can respond to or avoid the bully and be supported by their friends.
- Talking to the school even if your child does not want you to – racist bullying is a serious issue and your child's school will want to support you and your child to feel safe and welcome.
- Seeking support for yourself, if needed. Parentline is a phone service for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years old, and offers confidential and anonymous counselling and support. They can be contacted on **13 22 89**.

If the bullying continues, you may wish to talk to the principal.

If you're still not satisfied with the school's response, contact your **closest regional office** and ask to speak to the Community Liaison Officer in your area. They will help register your complaint and explain how the Department will consider it. Allow time for the regional office staff to speak with the principal and anyone else involved. If the issue is complex it could take more than 20 school days to resolve.

Resources and supports

- There is more information and resources about bullying on the Department of Education and Training website. See: **Bully Stoppers**
- If you want more information about what to do if your child is experiencing bullying, this page may be helpful: Bullying. No Way! – **How parents and carers can respond**