

Talking About Race



Torriano Primary School. Torriano Avenue, London, NW5 2SJ

Ph. 02074240202

Email. admin@torriano.camden.sch.uk

Talking About Race

At Torriano we reject racism and support our community to become more empathetic and resilient through kindness and mutual respect. As a school we continue to learn, innovate and contribute to building an anti-racist community.

What is race and racism?

Race can mean a person's colour, nationality, ethnicity or citizenship. It's a protected characteristic in law under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Race Relations Order 1997 in Northern Ireland. This means it's illegal to discriminate against someone, or treat them differently, because of their race.

It's important to remember that someone's ethnicity or national origin may not be the same as their current nationality. For example, someone may have Indian national origins and be living in Britain with a British passport.

Race also includes different ethnic and racial groups. This means a group of people who all share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity or race. General examples of racial groups include **White British, Black British, British Asians, British Sikhs, British Jews, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers.**



Types of Racism

Racial discrimination or racism is when someone is treated differently because of their race, ethnicity, nationality or colour. Any type of racism or racial discrimination is abusive and distressing for children and young people who experience or witness it. If someone commits a crime against you because of your race it is considered a hate crime and is against the law. Instances of bullying that are racially motivated but not a crime are considered **racist incidents**.

Racism - racial discrimination and racial bullying can take many forms and children may experience more than one type of racism. For example, a young person experiencing racial bullying in school could also be sent abusive comments online. Racism can also happen alongside other forms of discrimination or abuse.

Discrimination- This involves treating a child or young person worse than someone else in a similar situation because of their race. It can also include policies in a school, workplace or similar organisation that disadvantage people from a particular racial group

Harassment- This involves making a child, young person, or adult feel humiliated, offended or degraded. Harassment can be through spoken or written words, offensive emails, comments online or on social media, jokes, physical or facial expressions

Victimisation- This is when a person is treated badly because they have made a complaint of race related discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. It can also happen when someone is supporting a person who's complained about racism or racial discrimination

Overt racism- This involves making openly racist remarks to a child, young person or adult. It can include racist comments, such as being called racist names or being sent insulting messages or threats. It can also include physical violence or assault, or damaging personal belongings.

Covert Racism- Covert racism involves making comments that devalue or put someone down because of their race. These comments or 'microaggressions' reflect racial prejudice and can make young people feel like they're less important because of their race or that they don't fit in. Examples include things like saying 'I **don't see colour**', which may come from a well-intentioned place but it doesn't recognise the diversity which actually does exist. **If you claim to not see colour it can mean you're not acknowledging a young person's identity and lived experience.**

Gaslighting—racial gas lighting is when a victim is led to doubt and question their own sense of reality with regard to racism. For example countering someone's memory of events, withholding "understanding" or refusing to listen, conveniently "forgetting" or denying that something happened, playing down a person's feelings as unimportant or irrational, diverting to focus on credibility of what someone is saying and victim blaming. *le- they're such a nice family, they didn't mean anything.*

Talking with children about race and racism

If you have never experienced talking about racism or have not experienced racism yourself, you may be uncertain about how to talk about it. In order to give yourself the confidence to talk about this topic with children, we would recommend exploring the issue yourself first.

The [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) recommends adults start by reflecting on our own experiences when we were a child. You could put yourself in the shoes of a child by thinking about these questions:

- When did you first notice race as a child?
- How did you make sense of differences between people? What confused you?
- What childhood experiences did you have with people who were different from you in some way?
- How, if ever, did an adult support you in thinking about racial differences?

It is important to recognise that **systemic racism exists**. Racism is more than name calling.

It can be seen all around us, from beauty standards to the visibility and depiction of people in everyday society. It also affects the way people live, from the jobs they can get to their personal wellbeing and sense of safety. If you wish to learn more about racism and how it affects people in British society look at the [Runnymede Trust online](#) research.

You can also understand more about racism by listening to stories of lived experiences. Use [the Black Lives Matter: resources for young people resource](#) which contains stories and experiences as well as reflective activities to explore the effects of racism on individual wellbeing. Listening to the voices of those who experience racism is vital to understanding it. However, it is important to remember that these experiences are distressing. Be mindful and empathetic of the mental and emotional impact of these issues on those who experience it.

Turn this into a discussion by asking children to answer the question: How would I like other people to support me if I was being treated unfairly?

Creating a diverse and anti-racist environment

Ideas about race and identity are reinforced by our surroundings and influenced by what we see and hear every day. Being mindful of the amount of diversity and positive messages children are being surrounded by can help them develop healthy positive attitudes to differences between people.

It is important to add diverse voices and influences in all areas of people's lives in order to reflect the contributions diverse communities make to society. You can diversify your book and film collection to introduce different voices.

Remember that **you should add diverse voices, films and books to your collection when they are not talking specifically about race too.**



How to respond to questions and comments from children

Children may have lots of questions about race and racism. Racism may be something they have personally experienced and might be a difficult subject to talk about.

Some tips on how to respond to questions and comments about race and racism are:

- **Positively acknowledge questions about race and racism.** Even if the question is a difficult one to address, encouraging them to be confident enough to ask questions is important.
- **If the comment is negative, it is important to investigate it.** Ask them why they think this. Encourage them to think about how they might feel if someone said this about them.
- **It's ok not to know the answer.** Be honest about your own knowledge and understanding. If the question requires a definitive answer, you can use trusted sources on the internet to research the answer to the question together or you can offer to come back to it after you have researched further. Keep a note of the question.
- **Open up the question to discuss together if they are comfortable to do so.** Ask why they asked the question or what they or others in that space think about the topic – encourage them to unpack their own ideas and thoughts.
- **Be willing to listen and encourage an environment of active listening where people can share safely, and others listen and reflect on what others say.**



How to bring up the topic with children

You can incorporate the topic of **race and racism** into different situations and through PSHE lessons but don't be afraid to talk about the topic of race and racism directly.

Children as young as three recognise race and racial differences, so you can never start talking about race and racism too early.



Talking about racism regularly is the first step towards making a positive social change.



AIMS OF EDUCATION

Being anti-racist is about being active in challenging racism within all areas of society.

There are many things adults can do to create an anti-racist environment for children.

You can present positive role models from diverse backgrounds in all areas of your life.

You can champion a more diverse curriculum for your children and students by emailing curriculum setters.

You can support friends, family and colleagues through their experiences of racism and amplify diverse voices.

Think about your long-term plan of action. What can you do to create an anti-racist environment over the next year? You can make this plan of action with the children and work on it together.

You can also empower children to take simple actions in their everyday life to be anti-racist.

Children can practice anti-racism by:

- *Supporting their friends who say they have experienced racism or bullying*
- *Actively listening to their experiences*
- *Telling a teacher or adult when they witness or experience racism*
- *Accepting that they might not understand what it feels like, but can try to imagine and build empathy*
- *Using their own voice to make other people listen to their friend*
- *Not speaking for them or making the situation about themselves*
- *Think about how their friend might feel and supporting their wellbeing*

