

# Scripted conversations for staff involved in racist incidents

*Curriculum resource*



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Staff member as perpetrator

### ***First Incident – Inappropriate Comment (Unconscious Bias)***

**Context:** *A teacher commented on a student’s hair as “distracting” and “unprofessional.”*

**Leader:** “Thanks for joining me. I need to speak with you about a comment made in class yesterday. A concern has been raised that your description of a student’s hair as ‘distracting’ and ‘unprofessional’ has caused offence and distress.”

**Staff:** “Oh, I didn’t mean anything by it. I was just trying to give feedback.”

**Leader:** “I hear that, but we need to acknowledge that the language used reinforces harmful stereotypes about Black hairstyles. Whether or not it was intentional, the comment had a racist impact.”

**Staff:** “I see. I honestly hadn’t thought of it like that.”

**Leader:** “We’re not here to blame—but we are here to uphold our values. We have a responsibility to ensure every student feels respected. I’d like you to reflect on this and attend a session on inclusive language and bias.”

**Staff:** “Yes, I’d be willing to do that.”

**Leader:** “Thank you. The student will also be supported, and we’ll follow up with a restorative process if they’re comfortable. Let’s view this as a learning moment and a chance to do better.”

### ***Serious Incident – Racist Remark in Classroom***

**Context:** *A teacher made a racially stereotypical joke in front of students.*

**Leader:** “I need to speak with you about something serious. A student has reported that during your lesson yesterday, you made a remark that was racially offensive.”

**Staff:** “I was just making a joke. The class didn’t seem to take it that way.”

**Leader:** “Whether or not it was intended as humour, the remark reinforced a harmful stereotype and made at least one student feel targeted. That falls well below the standards we uphold here—and we are treating it as a racist incident.”

**Staff:** “I didn’t mean to offend anyone.”

**Leader:** “Intent does not override impact. We are responsible for the effect of our words, especially in a position of power. We’re initiating a formal review process and you will be expected to take part in anti-racism training and reflection. This is not optional.”

**Staff:** “Understood.”

**Leader:** “We expect high standards from all staff, and this includes upholding anti-racist values. We will support your learning, but we will also hold you accountable.”

## ***Repeated Behaviour – Microaggressions and Parental Complaints***

**Context:** *Multiple parents and students have raised concerns about repeated microaggressions.*

**Leader:** “I’ve asked to speak with you because we’ve received several concerns regarding repeated comments you’ve made to students about their names, accents, or cultural practices. These have been interpreted as microaggressions and have caused distress.”

**Staff:** “I thought I was just being curious and friendly. I ask all my students those things.”

**Leader:** “I want to be clear: asking certain students repeatedly where they’re ‘really from,’ or mocking unfamiliar names—even subtly—is a racial microaggression. It suggests they are ‘other’ and not fully part of this community.”

**Staff:** “I didn’t realise it was coming across that way.”

**Leader:** “I believe you—but we need you to take this seriously. We’re offering you coaching and training to reflect on your practice, and I expect a written reflection and commitment to change. Further incidents will escalate to formal disciplinary procedures.”

**Staff:** “Understood. I’ll take this opportunity to learn.”

**Leader:** “Good. We are committed to being an anti-racist school, and that means making changes—even when they’re uncomfortable.”

Staff member as target of racism

## ***Staff Targeted by Racist Comment from Student***

**Context:** *A student said to a Black teacher, “You don’t look like a proper teacher,” with a mocking tone, implying racial bias.*

**Leader:** “Thank you for meeting with me. I want to start by saying I’m really sorry this has happened. I understand a student made a racially inappropriate comment towards you in class yesterday.”

**Staff:** “Yes, and to be honest, it wasn’t the first time something like that’s been said.”

**Leader:** “That’s not acceptable. Racist behaviour from students—whether overt or subtle—is taken seriously, and you shouldn’t have to tolerate it. I’d like to make sure you’re supported, and that we respond appropriately.”

**Staff:** “I appreciate that. I just don’t want it brushed aside.”

**Leader:** “It won’t be. The student involved will be spoken to, their parents contacted, and they’ll face consequences and education around racism. We’d also like to offer you a check-in with a senior leader or mentor of your choice, and access to our staff wellbeing service.”

**Staff:** “That sounds helpful. Thank you.”

**Leader:** “Please let me know what you need moving forward. You have the right to feel safe, respected and fully supported here.”

### ***Racism from a Parent Toward a Staff Member***

**Context:** *A parent made derogatory remarks about a teacher’s accent and implied they were “not appropriate for the school.”*

**Leader:** “I want to talk about the incident that occurred during yesterday’s parent meeting. I’ve read the report, and I want to be clear: what that parent said to you was racist and completely unacceptable.”

**Staff:** “It was upsetting. I tried to stay calm, but I left feeling really shaken.”

**Leader:** “I’m really sorry you were put in that position. You should never have to experience racism in your role, and we are formally addressing the parent’s behaviour. They will be informed that it violated our values and code of conduct.”

**Staff:** “Thank you. I just didn’t know if it would be taken seriously.”

**Leader:** “It is. We’re also documenting this as a racist incident and will provide follow-up support. You may also want to speak with our staff wellbeing lead, or we can arrange time for you to reflect and recover away from the classroom if needed.”

**Staff:** “That would be appreciated.”

**Leader:** “You’re a valued member of this school. We won’t tolerate racism, and we’re here to stand beside you.”

### ***Staff Facing Subtle or Repeated Microaggressions from Colleagues***

**Context:** *A staff member has reported repeated microaggressions from peers—jokes about their name, assumptions about their culture, being repeatedly mistaken for other staff.*

**Leader:** “Thanks for coming in. I want to thank you for raising the concerns about the comments and treatment you’ve experienced from some colleagues. That takes courage, and it matters.”

**Staff:** “I’ve just felt really worn down by it—it’s constant. Jokes about my name, assumptions about where I’m from... it adds up.”

**Leader:** “I’m deeply sorry you’ve been experiencing this. Microaggressions are a form of racism, and they erode wellbeing and belonging over time. This is something we’re taking seriously.”

**Staff:** “I wasn’t sure if it would just be dismissed as ‘banter.’”

**Leader:** “We’re beyond that. We’ll be addressing this with the staff involved and offering whole-staff training focused on anti-racism and microaggressions. You’ll be involved in deciding how you’d like this handled—restorative conversation, mediation, or private accountability.”

**Staff:** “Thank you. I’d like to think this could help make things better—for me and others.”

**Leader:** “Absolutely. We’re committed to long-term cultural change, and your experience is helping drive that.”