

Student Voice in Handling Incidents

Handling Racist Incidents Toolkit



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1. Why Student Voice Matters

When learners are part of the process, schools build a stronger culture of accountability and belonging. Students who are empowered to speak up:

- Ensure incidents are not minimised or ignored.
- Help peers reflect and take responsibility.
- Build equity and leadership skills that extend beyond the classroom.

👉 **Key Principle:** Pupils must not only be consulted, but actively shape how incidents are handled.

2. Structures for Student Involvement

Schools and colleges can set up clear frameworks for student voice, including:

- **Peer Mediators:** Trained learners who support conversations between peers after incidents. (Please consider the age of the mediators before use of the scripts to interrupt racist behaviour)
- **Equity/Anti-Racism Groups:** Ongoing pupil-led forums for raising concerns and suggesting changes.
- **Youth Campaigns:** Student-led initiatives that promote inclusion, challenge stereotypes, and celebrate diversity.

3. Reflection Activities for Learners

For the learner harmed:

- Express feelings in safe spaces (journals, circles, creative outlets).
- Feedback to staff about whether support felt affirming.

For the learner who caused harm:

- Reflect on impact through guided prompts.
- Plan concrete steps for making amends.
- Engage in learning activities (see Section 2).

4. Peer Mediator Scripts

Ages 5–7 (Foundation / KS1)

(Keep language very simple. Use short sentences and repeat key ideas. Visuals like feelings faces or puppets can help.)

1. Opening

Adult: "I want to talk about what happened. What you said/did was racist. That means it hurt someone because of who they are. Racism is not okay in our school."

2. With the harmed learner

Adult: "How are you feeling right now? Can you show me with a feelings face (happy/sad/angry/worried)?"

Learner might respond: "Sad / angry / it was mean."

Adult: "Thank you for telling me. You didn't deserve that. You are safe here."

3. With the learner who caused harm

Adult: "Can you tell me what you said/did?"

Learner might deny or minimise: "I was joking."

Adult: "Even if you thought it was a joke, it was racist. It hurt [name]. How do you think [name] felt?"

Support the child to name a feeling (sad, angry, left out).

4. Repairing harm

Adult: "What can you do to help put things right?"

Options: say sorry, draw a picture, play together, say kind words.

If child is stuck, adult can suggest: "You could say sorry with your words, or do something kind."

5. Closing

Adult: "Thank you both for talking. Racism is never okay. Next time, what will you do differently?"

Encourage child to say: "I will use kind words / I will include others."

Ages 7–11 (KS2)

(Allow for more explanation. Learners can reflect on fairness and class rules. Use circle time style.)

1. Opening

Adult: "We are here to talk about what happened. What was said/done was racist. Racism means treating someone unfairly or unkindly because of their race or background. That's not okay here."

2. With the harmed learner

Adult: "Can you tell us what happened in your own words?"

Learner explains.

Adult: "How did that make you feel?"

Possible responses: "Sad, angry, embarrassed."

Adult: "Thank you for sharing. It's important we hear your voice. You were right to speak up."

3. With the learner who caused harm

Adult: "Can you tell me what you did/said?"

If minimising: "It was just banter."

Adult: "When words or actions hurt someone because of race, it's racism — even if you called it a joke. Do you understand that?"

Adult: "How do you think [name] felt?"

Encourage empathy: "If someone said that to you or your family, how would you feel?"

4. Restorative reflection

Adult: "When you did that, what were you thinking at the time?"

Adult: "What do you think now, after hearing how [name] felt?"

Adult: "What can you do to repair the harm?"

Ideas: apology, commitment to change, kind action, joining class activity respectfully.

5. Closing

Adult: "This is about learning. Racism is serious, and we all need to work together to stop it. What will you do differently next time?"

Ask both learners: "Is there something we can all do to make our class more respectful?"

Ages 11–14 (KS3)

(Older learners can handle deeper reflection. Keep it calm but firm. Focus on accountability, empathy, and commitments.)

1. Opening

Adult: "We're meeting to talk about the racist incident. Racism is behaviour or language that harms someone because of race, culture, or identity. It's not tolerated here, and we need to repair what happened."

2. With the harmed learner

Adult: "Would you like to describe what happened, in your own words?"

Learner explains.

Adult: "Thank you. That took courage. How did it make you feel?"

Learner: "Angry, embarrassed, not safe."

Adult: "Your feelings are valid. You should not have to experience racism here. What support do you need from us?"

3. With the learner who caused harm

Adult: "Tell me what happened from your point of view."

Learner: "I didn't mean it / It was a joke."

Adult: "Even if you didn't intend harm, it was racist. The impact matters more than the intent. Do you see how your words/actions affected [name]?"

Adult: "What were you thinking when you said/did that?"

Adult: "What do you think now, after hearing [name]?"

4. Restorative reflection

Adult: "What do you need to do to put this right?"

Encourage specific actions: apology, personal commitment, learning task (reflection journal, research on racism, presentation to class).

Adult: "What can you do to make sure this doesn't happen again?"

Learner: "Think before I speak / Challenge racist jokes / Show more respect."

5. Closing

Adult: "This isn't just about punishment. It's about learning and change.

[Name], do you accept responsibility for your actions?"

Adult: "Let's agree one or two commitments you will follow through on, and we will check back in [timeframe]."

To both: "Our school is a place for respect and safety. Racism has no place here."

5. Language Guide for Peer Mediators

Phrases to Avoid:

- ✗ "It was just a joke."
- ✗ "Maybe they didn't mean it."
- ✗ "You should just ignore it."

Phrases to Use:

- ✓ "That was racist."
- ✓ "I believe you."
- ✓ "This behaviour isn't acceptable."

6. Do's and Don'ts for Peer Mediators

✓ Do:

- Listen carefully without interrupting.
- Affirm and believe the learner harmed.
- Name racism clearly when it happens.
- Stay calm and respectful.
- Report everything to staff.

✗ Don't:

- Minimise the incident ("it's not that serious").
- Suggest ignoring it or "just moving on".
- Avoid using the word "racism".
- Shout, argue, or escalate conflict.
- Handle the whole incident alone.