

Responding to Racism

Introduction

This document reflects our desire as a Diocesan Board of Education, and part of the Church of England, to support schools in responding to racism appropriately. As Christians, we believe a number of things about God which influence our work in this area. First of all, we believe that God created us in His image, and that each person is precious and loved by God. This is seen in the very beginning of the Bible narrative in Genesis. Secondly, we believe that at Pentecost, believers from a wide variety of countries each spoke in their own languages, representing unity in diversity (Acts 2). Thirdly, we believe in the glorious picture of “a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and before the Lamb” united in worship in Revelation 7:9. There is much more, of course, throughout the Christian narrative about our unity and diversity but it is interesting that these images are found at the very beginning and end of the Bible.

The list of resources at the end of this document has books, links and networks which we hope you will find helpful. We acknowledge with gratitude the work done by Coventry diocese.

The Church of England

The [Church of England’s Vision for Education](#) sets out a vision of human flourishing which is about educating for wisdom, hope, community and dignity. It states, “Each school is to be a hospitable community that seeks to embody an ethos of living well together”. The [Church of England’s Called, Connected, Committed: 24 Leadership Practices for Educational Leaders](#) adds: “An authentic Christian vision for living well together is one that is scandalously inclusive: where all are welcomed, and where everyone gets to play a part...Diverse teams do not simply tick boxes or fulfil targets. We think, lead, teach and learn better because of our diversity”.

Racism

Schools are key places in which to develop a culture which is not merely non-racist, but anti-racist. Racism is prejudice, discrimination or bias towards people based on their race or ethnicity. It can take many forms, including using racist language, reinforcing racial stereotypes, microaggressions and institutional and systemic racism. Author Beverly Tatum explains the concept of racism versus anti-racism in her [book](#). Anti-racism is the belief that all people are equal regardless of their racial identity and that racism is an unjustified system of discrimination and oppression. It also relates to teaching and learning about the varied experiences of people from different racial groups.

Context

All schools have a Public Sector Equality Duty under the [Equality Act 2010](#). This places a duty on public authorities to promote equality, not merely to avoid discrimination. Race is one of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act. All church schools are inspected by both Ofsted and SIAMS. [Ofsted’s equality objectives \(2023-2027\)](#) state their objectives for these four years. [SIAMS inspections](#) look at schools’ theologically rooted Christian vision and how it enables pupils and adults to flourish, and how it creates a culture in which they are treated well and an active culture of justice and responsibility. Our work with Christian Aid on its [Global Neighbours scheme](#) supports the development of courageous advocacy. Developing an anti-racist culture fits well within this work.

What Schools can do:

- Talk about racism and your anti-racist response within the context of your Christian school status and the role that faith has to play.
- Allow pupils to ask questions about differences in a safe space.
- Evaluate your curriculum- see the [NEU framework](#) for ideas.
- Look at your books and other resources- are you ensuring that pupils encounter the breadth of diversity in modern Britain?
- Teach about justice and courageous advocacy, using the Bible as a key source.
- Use Christian Aid's [Global Neighbours scheme](#) to demonstrate commitment to anti-racism.
- Consider your school environment- do displays and posters celebrate diversity?
- Ensure that visitors to school are from a diverse heritage.
- Include opportunities for pupils to study and be inspired by poets, writers, artists and musicians from diverse backgrounds.
- Invest in craft supplies that represent a range of skin tones & use pictures in school-made resources that reflect diversity.
- Use Bibles and Christian resources that represent diverse representations of Jesus and Christianity, for example our collective worship resources.
- Celebrate heroes of the faith from other nationalities so pupils can more fully appreciate Christianity as a global religion, in collective worship, RE and the wider curriculum.
- Use Black History month as a focus but don't consider that to be enough.
- Consider how your school vision supports the response to racism which you wish to develop in staff and pupils.
- Consider using prayer spaces to support pupils in reflecting on their thoughts and feelings.
- Discuss the public sector equality duty at governors' meetings.
- Seek to reflect diversity among governors.
- Promote equal opportunities for all staff.

What Families can do:

- Speak up when family members make racist or stereotypical remarks or jokes.
- Teach children to celebrate diversity and difference.
- Read books and watch films with diverse characters and by diverse authors.
- Read this: How do we talk to children about race? <https://uwm.edu/news/talk-children-race-uwm-researcher-offers-advice/>

Talking to Children and Young People About Racism

It can help to use concepts of unfairness and injustice as a starting point for talking to pupils about racism, as children generally have a keen sense of fairness. Power, privilege and prejudice are all helpful concepts to explain. Not all groups have equal access to power. Thus, it is important to reflect on our own privilege and power and how we can use these to speak up for those without a voice ([Proverbs 31:8](#)).

So God created human beings in His image. In the image of God, He created them- Genesis 1:27

Remind pupils that all people are made in the image of God. It is through our diversity that the full expression of God as creator is lived and breathed. Black lives matter, and not only matter but are valued, beloved and needed. Jesus is the light of the world. When we face darkness, Jesus reminds us that love is what we need.

Set an example to children and young people

- Learn more yourself- books, articles and documentaries (see list below).
- Make sincere connections with a variety of individuals and cultivate diverse friendships to avoid stereotypes.
- Access other people's stories as much as possible so that your responses can be empathic and lead to bridge-building that can benefit children and young people.
- Remember, children and young people are watching for our response- 'actions speak louder than words'.

Curiosity

- Children ask questions, let them. Allow children and young people to be 'respectfully curious'. Racial issues should not be a taboo subject.
- Don't shut down conversations about difference as this may give the message that difference is wrong.
- Ask follow-up questions so you can better understand where children's questions and comments are coming from. A good question to ask is 'What makes you think that?'
- It's ok for you, as the adult, to not know the answer. Express your intention to learn together and draw on resources and people that will help you.
- Encourage children to channel their questions about race, difference and diversity towards safe adults, at home and at school.

Unfairness

- All children understand the concept of unfairness. Use this as a starting point.
- Teach pupils about justice and what this means. You could use this [information sheet](#) and send it home for families to share together too. Cornel West famously said: "Justice is what love looks like in public". Spend some time unpacking what is meant by this Bible verse:

And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God- Micah 6:8

Mistakes are allowed

Offence is often borne out of differences of experience. What one finds offensive can be a mystery to another.

- Encourage pupils to say 'Tell me more' when they have caused offence. The hope is that this can lead to open and honest conversations in which the offence is made obvious and more about racism is understood.
- Teachers should take every opportunity to educate on racial issues and support pupils in nurturing anti-racist responses.
- When pupils say wrong things, take the first step of listening to understand, before leading them to a better understanding of what racism is and how they can act differently.
- Encourage pupils to say sorry when they unintentionally cause offence on racial grounds and to ask, 'How do I not make this mistake again?'
- Leave 'perfect' behind. Take ownership of mistakes and commit to learning from them collectively, seeing every error as an opportunity for growth and learning- 'I don't fully understand about racism yet, but I will continue to listen and to learn.'
- Putting things in their historical context through studying of the past will help children and young people to better understand why some things are offensive.
- Teach about bias. We each have bias, both conscious and unconscious. Examine it and acknowledge that it exists and be curious about why it is there.
- Be more than just 'not racist' but actively 'anti-racist' and confront racial injustices even when it feels uncomfortable. It takes courage to do this, so we must teach our children and young people to be brave.

Advocacy

- "With advocacy, you want to allow people to speak for themselves, but you're also supporting them when they need assistance." Amber Coleman-Mortley
- Discuss with children and young people when it is time for them to speak up and when it is time to sit down and listen to what other people are telling us.
- Discuss the difference between equity and equality. This link may be helpful: <https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/>
- Act on issues of equity in your own context and encourage pupils to be active in this also, as part of your work on 'courageous advocacy'.
- Being anti-racist can start small and build up as education and understanding increases. Martin Luther King encouraged people to do what they could.
- As Maya Angelou said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." If we don't educate children and young people on these important issues, they cannot know better or do better.

Resources

From the National Society (Church of England)

Flourishing for All: Anti-bullying Guidance for Church of England Schools (2024)

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/education-publications/anti-bullying-guidance-church-england-schools>

Leaders like us programme <https://www.cefel.org.uk/leaderslikeus/>

Equity, diversity, inclusion and justice (EDIJ) <https://www.cefel.org.uk/EDIJ/>

Resources for Collective Worship including resources for national events and EDIJ topics.

<https://www.nse.org.uk/curriculum-and-inclusion/collective-worship>

From Christian Aid

Global Neighbours Scheme <https://globalneighbours.christianaid.org.uk/>

Other organisations

National Education Union Anti-racism charter framework <https://neu.org.uk/latest/library/anti-racism-charter>

Anti Bullying Alliance

<https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/at-risk-groups/racist-and-faith-targeted-bullying/racist-and>

The Key <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/pupils-and-parents/behaviour-and-attendance/bullying/recording-reporting-racism-incidents/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/public-sector>

Tackling race and faith targeted bullying face to face and online: A short guide for schools

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bf86fbced915d17d7f68481/Tackling_race_and_faith_targeted_bullying_face_to_face_and_online_-_a_guide.pdf

From gov.uk and DFE

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty>

Preventing and tackling bullying (2017)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1069688/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

From the House of Commons Library

Racial discrimination in schools (2023)

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2023-0049/>

Supportive Networks

Black and Minority Ethnic Network: working towards an education sector that is reflective of society. <https://www.bameednetwork.com/>

National Black Governors Network <https://nbgm.co.uk/>

Books for adults

How to be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi

Blindspot by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald

Black and British: An Illustrated History by David Olusoga

Books for children

- God's Dream by Desmond Tutu.
- I Am Enough by Grace Byers
- My Skin, Your Skin by Laura Henry-Allain
- A Kid's Book About Racism by Jelani Memory
- Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race by Megan Madison
- Stand Up and Speak Out Against Racism by Yassmin Abdel-Magied
- An Angel Just Like Me by Mary Hoffman (resources to support teaching available [here](#))
- All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold
- Look Up! By Nathan Bryon
- I Am Nefertiti by Anne-Marie Anang
- In Our Hands by Lucy Farfoot

Book Lists:

<https://www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk/books/DisplayBooklist.php?BookListID=372>

<https://www.amightygirl.com/blog?p=11056>

The Good Book Company has written a series Do Great Things for God. These include an ethnically diverse range of people and can be accessed at:

<https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/series/do-great-things-for-god/>

A prayer from Marian Wright Edelman's book, I'm Your Child, God:

I pray for peace in myself, in my family, in my community, in my country, and in all the world. I pray that no one will hate, that no one will kill, that all will forgive and live in love. Amen