



Reckleford Community School and Children's Centre Policy on racial and other prejudice-related incidents

Introduction

Reckleford School welcomes our duties under the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to a whole-school approach that will:

1. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
2. advance equality of opportunity; and
3. foster good relations

in relation to all characteristics protected under the Act (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; 'race' which includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality; religion or belief; sex; and, sexual orientation).

This policy links to our anti-bullying policy and our overall approach to safeguarding. However, we recognise that there are prejudice-based incidents, for example racist or sexist comments, in which there is no particular victim, and therefore that prejudice-based incidents may not constitute bullying. Nevertheless we think such incidents are serious and need to be properly addressed, for the well-being of our school community, for pupils' educational development and for the health of society as a whole.

Responding to prejudice-based incidents – general principles

We recognise that prejudice-based incidents are very varied, but must all be taken seriously in order to:

- reassure the targets/victims;
- ensure that incidents do not recur;
- ensure that all members of our school community understand that prejudice-based incidents are not acceptable; and,
- ensure that the school community as a whole remains safe.

Sometimes no overt racist or other discriminatory language may have been used and it may not be immediately apparent that an incident is based on prejudice. However we recognise that the Stephen Lawrence enquiry report recommended that for the purposes of reporting and recording, "*a racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person*". This definition was proposed in order to ensure that incidents are always properly investigated and never treated lightly because the

individual person to whom an incident is first reported is not sure that a particular incident was racist. We apply this recommendation to all prejudice-based incidents. We therefore ensure that all prejudice-based incidents are recorded and properly investigated, and that appropriate and proportionate actions are taken.

Following the Stephen Lawrence enquiry report recommendations, Somerset County Council has a well-established system of racial incident reporting and we support this by reporting all incidents. The reporting form contains a list of the many different types of racial incidents, including name calling, racist statements, racist jokes, assault, damage to property, graffiti, social exclusion and spreading malicious rumours. The form also highlights the fact that incidents might be verbal or written and may include use of text messaging or other technology.

Our approach to prejudice-based incidents links closely with our approach to all bullying, which we always address robustly. We also recognise that there are features of racism and other prejudice-based behaviour that can make it particularly hurtful and damaging. Some of the features of racism have been summarised in national guidance and many of these apply to a large extent to other types of prejudice-based behaviour, such as sexism, homophobia and prejudice based on disability. These features include:

- Racism has a long history affecting millions of people and is a common feature in wider society. People are seriously harmed and injured by it.
- Most bullying involves a series of incidents over time. In the case of racist bullying, however, a single one-off incident may have precisely the same impact as a series of incidents over time. This is because it may be experienced by the person at the receiving end as part of a general pattern of racist hostility. It can in consequence be every bit as intimidating, rejecting and hurtful as a series of events over time.
- Racist words and behaviour are experienced as attacks on the values, loyalties and commitments central to a person's sense of identity and self-worth.
- A distinctive feature of racist bullying or insults is that a person is targeted not as an individual, as in most other types of bullying, but as the representative of a family, community or group. Other members of the same group, family or community can therefore be made to feel threatened and intimidated as well. People who experience racism may feel they have to stand up against it not just for their own sake but on behalf of their family and community and there is an increased danger of cycles of verbal abuse and possibly violence developing.
- The law of the land recognises the seriousness of racism by requiring that courts should impose higher sentences when an offence is aggravated by racist hostility. It is therefore important that children and young people showing racist attitudes are helped to understand the seriousness of racism so that they do not suffer the consequences of this

Responding to prejudice-based incidents – our approach

Our approach to responding to individual incidents and in particular the sanctions we take will vary depending on several factors, including which of the following broad categories the incident falls into:

- 1) No offence was intended or taken;
- 2) Hurt or distress was caused, but the offending behaviour is unlikely to be repeated;
- 3) Hurt or distress was caused, and the children and young people (or adults) responsible, had previously been warned that their behaviour was unacceptable;
- 4) Substantial hurt or distress was caused; the behaviour was based on substantial hostility and prejudice; the behaviour may be repeated.

As stated above, we are never dismissive about incidents, for example ignoring or making light of them. Nor do we take a merely punitive approach – expressing disapproval or punishing without complementary teaching and learning about why prejudice-based incidents are wrong, or why comments/actions have caused hurt.

We always ensure we take the time to help children and young people understand why prejudice-based behaviour is wrong and wherever appropriate we use restorative approaches, which include: supporting the victim(s) by attending to the needs of those on the receiving end of prejudice; preventing re-offending by enabling offenders to assume active responsibility for their actions and reintegrating them into the school community; avoiding escalation; and, repairing and recreating the community damaged by the bullying or other prejudice-based behaviour.

We also ensure that we keep parents/carers informed about prejudice-based incidents that have affected their children and the outcomes of investigations into such incidents.

Staff responsibilities for responding to prejudice-based incidents

Promoting equality and responding appropriately to prejudice-based incidents is the responsibility of the whole school community and we try to ensure that all members of the community are aware of their responsibilities and support the school's ethos.

The **governing body** is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and strategies are

implemented. It monitors prejudice-based incidents on an annual basis and ensures that where appropriate this review informs future planning. A member of the governing body will have a 'watching brief' over prejudice based incidences.

The **headteacher** is responsible for implementing the policy and for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities (through the staff handbook and other information sharing) and are given appropriate training and support. The headteacher also has responsibility for investigating prejudice-based incidents, contacting the local authority for advice where necessary, taking appropriate action including keeping parents/carers informed of the outcomes of investigations and reporting racial incidents to the Local Authority (though this responsibility may be delegated to other senior managers).

All **teachers and other staff** are expected to respond appropriately to any prejudice-based incidents that may occur, indicating why such behaviour is not acceptable. They also ensure that incidents are reported quickly to the headteacher and/or other senior staff. Staff know that whenever an incident is reported to them by someone else as racist or based on other prejudices, or whenever they themselves think it may be prejudice-based, they must report it to senior staff. Information for staff on their responsibilities is in our staff handbook.

All **pupils** are encouraged to treat each other, and other people they meet, with respect, and to report any prejudice-based incidents to an adult.

All **parents/carers** are made aware of this policy and encouraged to report any prejudice-based incidents to a staff member. They are encouraged to support the school's ethos and aims through their interaction with children.

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