

# What can I do if my child is racially harassed at school?

## A guide for parents/carers



2004-2008  
Planning Period  
2000-2006  
Financial Year



# What does the law say?

The Race Relations Act of 1976 makes it unlawful to discriminate on racial grounds. The Act places a legal duty on Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and school to provide services without discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. In addition, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places general and specific duties on schools and the LEA. Schools must promote good race relations and must work to prevent racist incidents before they occur through effective policies and practices.

*Schools should have a policy for dealing with racial harassment which clearly sets out the procedures. This should either be;*

- *a separate racial harassment policy;*
- *or a specific section within another policy, e.g Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying policy.*

The school has a legal responsibility to report racist incidents to the LEA and to

include a summary of incidents and action taken in the Annual Governor's Report to parents/carers.

Unfortunately racism is still experienced by many children, and schools can be taking a preventative and proactive approach to this issue. Racism can be intentional or unintentional but the impact can be just as serious.

Racial harassment can create feelings of fear, anger, embarrassment and hurt not only in the victim but also within the family and community. Because of these feelings some pupils may find it difficult to report an incident.

Some people are not clear about when to consider an incident as racist, particularly if the children are very young. The definition of a racist incident is 'any incident, which is perceived to be racist by the victim, or any other person'. Therefore, if any party considers an incident to be racist, the school should treat it as that and follow the procedures.

*(Source: Code of Practice on Reporting and Recording Racist Incidents, Home Office. May 2000)*

# What is racial harassment?

Racial harassment can also take the form of:

- Physical violence, such as jostling, intimidation, punching, bullying or kicking, use of weapons against a person or group because of colour, ethnicity, nationality or religion
- Verbal abuse and threats – name calling is the most common expression of racism. This is sometimes viewed as trivial, although its affect on children can be profound
- Racist graffiti
- Provocative behaviour, racist badges etc. – bullying through text messages on mobile phones
- Racist comments in the case of discussion in the classroom
- Ridicule of cultural differences; food, dress, language, etc
- Racist jokes, insults and comments
- Physical assault against a person or group because of colour, ethnicity, nationality or religion
- Incitement of others to behave in a racist way
- Refusal to co-operate/work with other pupils because of their race, colour, ethnicity, nationality or religion
- Bringing racist material to school

*(This is not an exhaustive list and new types of incidents regularly emerge)*

Racial harassment may be committed by anyone, including other pupils and adults, and can affect any pupil or adult

# What can you do if your child is racially harassed at school?

- Support your child by listening carefully to him/her and explain that you will need to speak to the Headteacher
- Contact the school as soon as possible and make an appointment with the Headteacher. You may choose to take someone with you
- If you feel that you cannot directly approach the Headteacher, you may find it helpful to let a teacher, Learning Mentor, Home/School Liaison Worker or the Parent Governor of the school know of your concerns
- Give the Headteacher or other member of staff as much information as possible; when, where, who was involved
- You may ask for a copy of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy or Behaviour Policy or the relevant policy that covers racial harassment to check the procedures that should be followed
- Find out what steps have been taken to deal with the incident(s) if the school is already aware. If the school was not previously aware of the incident(s), what do they intend to do?
- Ask to be kept informed of the action to be taken and the time it will take
- Also ask for a written response
- Consult the Guidance that schools should follow on the LEA website:  
<http://www.bristol-lea.org.uk/services/eit/incidents.html>
- As a parent/carer you should expect to be fully involved in discussions and decisions concerning your child. If needed, the school must provide an interpreter to support parents/carers/family members

# Where can I go for support?

## Support Against Racist Incidents (SARI)

PO Box 2454  
Bristol  
BS2 2WX  
Tel: 0117 942 0060  
Fax: 0117 942 0038  
Email: [sari@sari.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:sari@sari.freeseve.co.uk)

## Bristol Race Equality Council (BREC)

Colston House  
Colston St  
Bristol  
BS1 5AP  
Tel: 0117 929 7899  
Fax: 0117 922 7713  
Email: [bristolrec@compuserve.com](mailto:bristolrec@compuserve.com)

## Bristol City Council

Bristol City Council is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, injustice and inequality. The Council aims to ensure that all members of the community are able to exercise their rights to services and employment. The full version of the Council's Equalities Policy is available from Bristol City Council's Equalities and Social Inclusion Team at the Council

House, College Green, Bristol and can also be found on the Council's website – [www.bristol-city.gov.uk](http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk).

## Department of Education and Lifelong Learning

This leaflet and our guidance to schools are part of the Department's commitment and efforts to deal with racial harassment. We are continuing to work towards creating an ethos of equal opportunities throughout the LEA. The Department has a policy and procedure for dealing with incidents of racial harassment in schools and has recently issued detailed guidance and reporting forms to all schools. We are committed to providing equality in our services, free from racism and prejudice, which allows all children to achieve their best in a safe environment.

If you have any concerns relating to racial harassment at school, contact the Headteacher at the school or the Race Equality Officer.

## Bristol City Council Education and Lifelong Learning

April 2005

## If you are not satisfied with the process?

If the racial harassment has not stopped or you are not happy with the action taken, you can contact the school's Chair of Governors whose name can be found in the school prospectus.

Following this, if you are not satisfied with the decision made by the Governing Body, you can write to:

**Communications Manager**  
PO Box 57  
Council House  
College Green  
Bristol BS99 7EB

## For further advice contact:

### **Race Equality Officer**

Su Coombes  
PO Box 57  
Council House  
College Green  
Bristol BS99 7EB  
Tel: 0117 903 7595  
Fax: 0117 903 7963  
Email: [susan\\_coombes@bristol-city.gov.uk](mailto:susan_coombes@bristol-city.gov.uk)

If you would like this information in a different format, for example Braille, audiotape, large print or computer disc, or community languages, or if you require further copies, please contact Equalities and Inclusion Team, Education and Lifelong Learning on 0117 903 7722 or email [ellequalities\\_team@bristol-city.gov.uk](mailto:ellequalities_team@bristol-city.gov.uk)

