



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**
Children's
Commissioner
for **Wales**

Spotlight Report: 'Take it Seriously': Children's experiences of Racism within Secondary Schools



Acknowledgements

This report has been produced due to the hard work of the Children's Commissioner for Wales staff project team – Gerli, Sab, Lewis, Chloe, Teleri, Sophie and Rhiannon who have designed and delivered the different elements of this report over the last year.

I'm extremely thankful to all those children, young people, teachers, head teachers and other professionals who generously shared their views, insights and experiences with us to inform the report.

I am also grateful for the very helpful and insightful advice received from Chantelle Haughton of DARPL and Cardiff Metropolitan University and from Professor Charlotte Williams of Bangor University at different stages of the project, and during the report drafting.

I would also like to recognize the input and advice from the members of the Young Person's project steering group, a subgroup of my Young People's Advisory Panel in steering the project.



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**
Children's
Commissioner
for Wales

Contents

01	FOREWORD by the Children’s Commissioner for Wales	04
02	BACKGROUND	05
03	POLICY & LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT	07
04	EXISTING EVIDENCE BASE	10
05	METHODOLOGY	14
06	WHAT WE HEARD FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	16
	Experiences of Racism in Schools ..	17
	Barriers to reporting racism	21
	Suggestions from learners for dealing with racism	23
	Better support for students experiencing racism	26
	Wider learning about racism and diversity	28
07	WHAT WE HEARD FROM SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHERS	32
08	WHAT WE HEARD FROM KEY ADULT STAKEHOLDERS	37
09	CONCLUSIONS	40
	Recommendations	41
	Appendices	44
	Endnotes	47

01 FOREWORD

by the Children's Commissioner for Wales

Children have the right to education (Article 28, UNCRC) and all children have these rights, irrespective of their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (Article 2, UNCRC).

The experiences we have heard in compiling this report suggest that, sadly, very many children and young people experience racism and racist incidents within secondary school, and few have confidence in how this is dealt with. Teachers and stakeholders discussed similar experiences, echoing issues of lack of confidence and lack of clarity on how to respond to these incidents.

These themes are familiar and recurrent and echo those of reports I have myself authored and contributed to in previous roles working with ethnic minority young people over the last two decades.

Despite welcome improvements with regards to the diversity of the *content* of what pupils learn¹, it seems that there remains much room for improvement in the *experiences* of learners within schools, and there is growing evidence of racism and racist bullying being widespread and persistent across Wales². It is now past time to act on this growing evidence.

For this research, my team and I spoke to 170 children and young people from minority diverse range of backgrounds, from local authority areas spanning the breadth of Wales. We also gathered views and experiences from teachers, head teachers and other educators from a total of seventeen schools, as well as hearing from a range of experts and stakeholders in the field. I'm very grateful to all who shared their views and their time so generously.



Wales has made huge inroads over recent years in its commitment to an Anti-Racist Wales, to a broader and more diverse curriculum and to Children's Rights. But what we heard during this research indicates that children are still experiencing racism and racist incidents on a regular basis, and therefore there is more to do to ensure schools can effectively tackle, reduce and respond to racism and racist incidents.

The recommendations we make are ones that we hope will be considered and implemented by all schools in Wales, no matter their levels of diversity, to ensure that all learners in schools in Wales can feel safe and included, respected and not discriminated against, no matter their backgrounds.

Rocio Cifuentes MBE
Children's Commissioner for Wales
October 2023

02 BACKGROUND

The role of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales is to protect and promote the rights of all children in Wales. Children in Wales are an increasingly ethnically diverse group, with almost 13% (over 50,000) of all school pupils coming from ‘Any other ethnic background’ other than ‘White British’³.

There is considerable regional variation, ranging from 34.4% in Cardiff schools to 4.1% in Anglesey schools. Despite this regional variation, ethnic diversity can be seen in learner populations in all areas of Wales. This includes children from diverse backgrounds including African, Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Central and South American and European heritage, with the majority of these having been born in Wales.

The office has previously undertaken some focused work into different issues affecting ethnic minority children, including a report on the impact of the Covid pandemic on children from ethnic minority backgrounds⁴, and a resource for Tackling Islamophobia⁵. Furthermore, the issue of bullying including identity-based bullying has been identified as a priority by every Commissioner since the role was established in 2001. It emerged strongly within our most recent national survey Ambitions for Wales⁶, and racism and identity-based bullying is subsequently a priority within the current 3 year strategy⁷. However the office has not previously focused specifically on racism, racist incidents or racist bullying.

In recent years, and particularly since 2020 and the death of George Floyd, there have been increased commitments and efforts on a national level to tackle racism and boost understanding of diversity. In Wales, the Welsh Government published their ‘Anti-racist Wales Action Plan’⁸ (ARWAP) in 2022, an ambitious and comprehensive plan which was co-produced with individuals and organisations with lived experience of racism. The ARWAP has a dedicated section on education with a large number of commitments.

In 2023, the new Curriculum for Wales came into force in Wales, with one of its four purposes being ‘to create ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the world’. To support this, Welsh Government commissioned ground-breaking work led by Professor Charlotte Williams, which led to Wales becoming the first country in the UK to make mandatory the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history within the school curriculum⁹. A key element arising from that work has been the commissioning of professional learning for educators on racism and anti-racism through the Diversity and Anti-Racism Professional Learning (DARPL) project.

However, despite these important steps towards improving the diversity of what children learn in schools, and what teachers learn about racism, evidence continues to build about the unequal experiences of schooling and continuing experiences of racism and racist incidents amongst learners from diverse ethnic groups.

In this context, we did not set out to redefine the problem of racism in schools, rather we set out to help identify potential solutions and, through hearing the views of young people and educators, suggest how schools could be more effectively supported to respond to and tackle racism and racist incidents.

Our project focuses on racist incidents as the clearest expression of both individual and institutional racism, but what we heard from those we spoke to suggests strongly that schools need to think beyond a purely reactive approach to responding to racist incidents to a more proactive one which embeds anti-racism as a whole school approach.

Our project focuses on secondary schools in Wales only, primarily due to the limitations in our own capacity as research team.

Definitions

At the outset it is important to define 'racism', and that racism can be both individual and institutional.

Institutional racism

refers to the broader organisational and structural processes, attitudes and behaviours, which are rooted in history and which have the effect of discriminating against and disadvantaging people from ethnic minority backgrounds¹⁰.

.....

Individual racism

means an individual's attitudes and behaviours which may be based on racist stereotypes and ideas of inferiority of superiority. Put simply, individual racism is treating someone differently or regarding them as inferior because of their skin colour, religion, nationality or culture.

.....

Racist incidents

are therefore behaviours (actions or words) which can be seen as an expression of both underlying individual racism and institutional racism. A racist incident, as per Macpherson's definition is 'any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person', as articulated during the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry¹¹.

We explored the understanding of racism and racist incidents of the children, young people and adults we spoke to as part of this project, to inform our own definition, and in practice, most used 'racism' to mean racist incidents – ie when talking about a behaviour or verbal exchange. However, we suggest that it is timely for a new working definition of racism and racist incidents to be agreed by educators and pupils in Wales.

03 POLICY & LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Schools may approach racism and racist incidents in a number of different ways at present, including as a form of bullying, or as a hate-incident or hate-crime.

As a children's rights organisation, the Children's Commissioner for Wales is opposed to the unnecessary criminalization of children and young people and would advocate for the use of restorative justice approaches where possible, rather than involving children and young people in the criminal justice system.

Our findings suggest that further work is needed to ensure there is clarity for schools, and for pupils and their families on how racism and racist incidents are defined, and how they can expect such incidents to be dealt with.

Anti-bullying Guidance

The current statutory anti-bullying guidance 'Rights, respect, equality: statutory guidance'¹² was published by Welsh Government in 2019. It applies to both general bullying and prejudice-related bullying, including racism, and reiterates the importance of schools treating bullying around race, religion and culture equally to other forms of bullying. The guidance describes bullying linked to race, culture, and religion as a 'range of hurtful behaviour both physical and psychological, that makes a person feel unwelcome, marginalised, excluded or powerless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith (including lack of faith), national origin or national status'.

Under this guidance, schools in Wales are under an obligation to address and challenge all forms of racism and racist bullying. The guidance links bullying to the human rights of children as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), with reference to Article 19: the right to be protected from harm, and Article 28: the right to education. Schools are expected to record incidents of racist bullying (and bullying of any other nature), and it should be recorded in distinct and separate categories, noting the basis of the racist bullying, e.g. on the basis of religious heritage, ethnicity, race or refugee status.

The Rights, respect, equality: statutory guidance sets out an obligation on schools to develop and implement an anti-bullying strategy to proactively challenge and prevent bullying, including racism and racist bullying. Schools are expected to work with learners, their families, and communities to ensure the right support and outcome is provided for the child or young person being bullied.

It states:

'The Welsh Government expects schools to have in place mechanisms for reporting and recording bullying which are clearly communicated to the whole school community... The Welsh Government expects schools to record all incidents of bullying, outlining the specific types of bullying, including bullying around the protected characteristics. The Welsh Government expects schools to monitor processes regularly. This will enable schools to modify their bullying policies to respond to specific trends and emerging issues in a swift and effective manner.'

Hate Incidents/ Crime

Some racist incidents can also be categorised as a hate incident or hate crime. The Welsh Government Hate Hurts Wales¹³ webpage offers the following definition:

'A hate crime is any criminal behaviour which appears to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice, or includes words or behaviour that show hostility, based on a person's perceived: race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity, disability.

A hate crime can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property.

The perpetrator could be someone unknown to you, or they could be a friend.

Hate crime can take place both in person and online.'

There is less clarity on how schools should deal with racist hate incidents or hate crime within schools. One report published in 2020 by Victim Support and commissioned by Welsh Government found that children were becoming victims of hate crime in schools "at an alarming rate", and that schools did not always distinguish appropriately between bullying and hate incidents^{14 15}.

Legal Framework

The legal framework around prejudice related harassment in Wales includes the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act, as well as specific duties on Welsh ministers under the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, to have due regard to the UNCRC when exercising their functions. There is also a duty in the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 for schools to promote knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC. Statutory guidance, 'Rights, Respect, Equality' requires schools to have in place mechanisms for reporting and recording bullying which are clearly communicated to the whole school community.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) schools are under an obligation to ensure appropriate and effective action is taken to remove or minimise disadvantages encountered by learners owing to their having protected characteristics.¹⁶

Anti-racism Wales Action plan

In 2022 the Welsh Government published the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (the Plan), a comprehensive strategy to address race equality across government, including within education. The Plan recognises that for many children and young people, experiences of racism are commonplace across all levels of education, that children and young people often find themselves feeling voiceless and not taken seriously about their experiences, resulting in a lack of reporting and recording of racist incidents within schools and colleges. The Plan highlights that existing systems of reporting are inconsistent, and that the Welsh Government currently lacks data on racist bullying and harassment in education settings,

meaning there is no clear picture of the scale of the issue or of the barriers faced by children and young people experiencing racism.

In order to tackle these inequalities, the Plan makes a series of commitments including to consider a Wales-wide system of reporting and data collection, which will specifically collect data in relation to bullying and harassment, including based on protected characteristics; and for schools and colleges to strengthen their reporting, recording, and monitoring processes. The plan also sets out that schools are expected to develop anti-racist approaches and publish information on their progress and the impact on learners and staff, as well as engage with other educational institutions to share good practice, and develop shared approaches and resources.

“Racism is still a reality for many of our learners and educators. Many will experience overt and direct racism, through racial bullying and harassment within our education settings, often from their peers. All will experience more subtle forms of racism through the everyday reality of our society; the systems, structures and processes that produce radically differential outcomes for ethnic minority groups.

The Welsh Government is currently considering a Wales-wide system of reporting and data collection which will specifically collect data in relation to bullying and harassment, including on the basis of protected characteristics. This new system will help us bridge this data gap and gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic learners.”

Welsh Government Anti-racism Action Plan, 2022

The New Curriculum for Wales and Diversity in the Curriculum

The New Curriculum For Wales¹⁷ calls for ethical and global citizenship and other opportunities across the Four Purposes of the Curriculum. It became mandatory for Years 7 and 8 as of September 2023.

A working group was set up by Welsh Government, led by Professor Charlotte Williams to explore diversity in the curriculum. Their final report ‘Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group¹⁸’ was published in 2021. Welsh Government accepted in full its 51 recommendations, and is what led to the Welsh Government making mandatory the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories within the new curriculum.

The Diversity and Anti-Racism Professional Learning (DARPL¹⁹) project was set up in response to the professional learning recommendations of the ‘Cynefin’ working group. DARPL is funded by Welsh Government and led by Cardiff Metropolitan University, in a community of practice approach with a wide range of partners including BAMEed Network (Wales). DARPL aims to provide a national model for professional learning for those working across all tiers in education, childcare and play to develop an understanding and development of anti-racist practice and leadership.

04 EXISTING EVIDENCE BASE

Key research produced on the topic in recent years shows clearly that the experience of racism is widespread for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds living in Wales.

This is evidenced by successive research reports based on the views and reported experiences of children and young people and teachers in Wales.

Show Racism the Red Card

Show Racism the Red Card (SRTRC) have published successive reports highlighting the extent of racism in schools in Wales.

In a report published in 2020²⁰, over 1000 educators were surveyed as well as 428 pupils from 7 schools. Amongst educators surveyed, 25% said that they had observed, responded to, or had a pupil report a racist incident in the last 12 months. Additionally, 61.5% of the 1058 respondents said that a pupil in their current school had expressed misconceptions or stereotypes, with the majority of these focused around skin colour, religion and nationality. Amongst pupils, 77% of 428 pupils said racism existed in their school. 30% of those also admitted to using racist language against another pupil.

This research built on an earlier survey carried out in 2016²¹, which involved nearly 600 primary and secondary school pupils and 560 teachers

and trainee teachers in Wales. This research found that two in five upper Key Stage 2 pupils have been victims of racial discrimination, and that one in five upper Key Stage 2 pupils have used racist language towards a peer. It further found that the majority of teachers (69%) do not feel well trained or confident when sourcing and filling out racist incident forms and the majority of teachers (70%) do not feel well trained or confident when following up racist incidents with senior staff or parents.

SRTRC give wider context to their reports stating "This feeds into the national picture in which Estyn have raised concerns around the under-recording of racist incidents in schools and lack of response [1]; hate crime reports have risen significantly [2]; there have been warnings about the rise of the Far Right [3] and many reports have found negative attitudes towards Muslims and perceived Muslims in the UK [4]."

Race Alliance Wales

In 2021 Race Alliance Wales published a peer-led research report 'Show Us You Care' which highlighted the experience of racism of young people at different stages of the educational system and the long-term and sometimes traumatic effects of this²². The report characterized the experience within secondary schools as follows:

“Within secondary school educational settings, racism is seemingly expressed in a much more complex way. As young people transition between primary and secondary school, they experience a lot of changes in meeting new people, making new friends and for some white young people, possibly being faced with racial diversity for the first time. As racialised young people... they shared experiences of racism as direct, indirect (mainly through micro aggressions) as well as institutional via school policies. Similar to primary school, many young people experienced name calling based around racial and religious characteristics. However, at this [secondary school] stage young people explained the name-calling was with intent, and sometimes malice, unlike that experienced at primary school level. Young people explained they would often face name-calling such as the P-word, N-word, 'curry munchers' relating to their race”

Show us you care, RAW, 2021

EYST

Published in 2018, a collaborative paper²³ between Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST), Show Racism the Red Card, Race Council Cymru and Tros Gynol Plant (TGP Cymru) sought to provide an overview of the evidence around racism within schools. Drawing together reports and evidence from the four organisations, the report presents the widespread and 'normalised' experience of racism amongst ethnic minority young people in schools, the importance of and the overall 'severely lacking' response from teachers and schools, and the critical role of the curriculum in shaping young people's views about race and diversity.

'The voices of BAME Young people foregrounded within this document express loud and clear that for a significant proportion of the growing number of BAME pupils in Wales, the experience of racism is an everyday almost normalised one with lasting and damaging impact. These voices also bring into sharp focus the critical role of schools and teachers in how they respond to racism, with this response found to be severely lacking on the whole, compounded by a lack of BAME teachers, particularly at senior levels in Wales. Also illuminated is the way in which a 'white-washed' curriculum distorts both the BAME pupils' sense of self-worth as well as their own and their white peers' understanding of their place and value in the world.'

Experiences of Racism and Race in Schools in Wales, EYST et al, 2018.

ESTYN

In their 2019 report 'Healthy and Happy', Estyn highlighted that discrepancy between the messages given and the lived experience of pupils is a key reason why secondary schools are less successful than primary schools in supporting pupils' health and wellbeing.

'Around two-thirds of primary schools and a third of secondary schools in Wales have an inclusive whole-school approach to supporting pupils' health and wellbeing...

Most other schools have several strong aspects to their support for pupils' health and wellbeing, despite their approach not being fully whole-school. However, unless a school has all the key aspects listed above, in order to present a coherent message and a consistent experience for pupils, there is a risk that isolated good work is undermined and its impact limited. For example, lessons about bullying are of limited

value unless pupils are satisfied with how the school deals with allegations of bullying; similarly, policies about restorative practice mean little to pupils unless staff apply those approaches when working with pupils.'

The report also highlights the importance of recording and reporting incidents:

'Only a minority of schools keep useful records about bullying, with schools often only recording what they regard as serious. By not recording carefully any allegation of bullying by pupils or what may be considered as a minor incident, schools are at risk of being unable to build up a picture over time about certain pupils whose wellbeing may be a significant concern but unknown to the school. It also means that schools are unable to evaluate effectively their work in relation to the protected characteristics.'

The School Health Research Network (SHRN)

The School Health Research Network²⁴ (SHRN) is a partnership between Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and Cardiff University with the aim to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing through gathering and using evidence for health improvement.

During 2021/22 just under 125,000 young people aged 11 to 16 participated in the survey.

The findings from the survey highlights the diverse school experiences of young people from different ethnic groups in Wales. It found that 32% of young people reported being a victim of school bullying in the past couple of months, this percentage was higher for

young people from some ethnic groups. The percentage of children that felt accepted by their teacher was lower for some ethnic groups. Similarly, there was a disparity in the percentage of young people that felt their teacher cared about them as a person. The findings of the research highlighted that some ethnic groups were less likely than others to rate their life satisfaction as above 6. Responses from Gypsy/ Traveller young people reported lower life satisfaction in comparison to other ethnic groups.

Ambitions for Wales

In 2022, the Children's Commissioner for Wales conducted a national consultation of children and young people – Ambitions for Wales²⁵, in which 8,830 children and young people, 507 professionals and 876 parents/carers participated. The consultation was designed to hear the views and experiences of children, young people, parents and carers, and professionals who work with children around themes relevant to children's lives in Wales.

The survey found that:

- 57.2% of BAME children aged 7-11 worry about bullying
- 30.1% of child respondents (aged 7-11) reported experiencing bullying or being treated differently because of who they are., with this rising to 42.1% amongst those with mixed heritage
- Of those that reported experiencing bullying, 80.5% BAME children (aged 7-11) reported experiences of bullying in school.
- Almost a third (30.3%) of 12-18 year olds reported experiencing bullying or abuse.

Gwent Safeguarding Board and Cardiff Met University and DARPL - research in Primary and Secondary Schools (2023)

This collaborative work reported on research conversations with learners aged 8-16 years old, throughout the Gwent, South Wales in ten schools (across primary and secondary). The research team comprised teachers and academics with diverse lived experiences. The participant voices clearly illuminated issues, ideas and recommendations for solutions similar

to within the Spotlight Report. The findings and recommendations generated are being used to support regional action planning. Wider dissemination will take place going forward.

05 METHODOLOGY

Building on the existing evidence base, and review of the existing policy and legislative context, ours was an exploratory study aiming to gather the views of children and young people, alongside those of teachers and other key stakeholders.



Our aim was to understand experiences of racism within secondary education, as well as identifying examples of practice including good practice, which may point to gaps within the existing guidance and policy frameworks.

We employed mainly qualitative research methods including focus groups, roundtable discussions and one to one interviews. All our data collection took place between May 2023 and June 2023.

Our research sought to hear from three distinct groups:

- **Secondary school-aged children and young people**
- **Teachers and Head-teachers**
- **Stakeholders in the field of Education**



Children and Young People engagement

Our research aimed to hear the views and experiences of secondary school pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds about racism and racist incidents. We employed participative engagement methods to ensure that children were able to play an active part throughout the research process, both as co-producers of and as participants in the research. This approach was devised with close consideration of the articles set out within the UNCRC, including their right to participation (Article 12) and their right to freedom of expression (Article 13).

We established a children and young people's steering group to shape the research design, data collection and analysis. We recruited 10 children from the office's existing advisory panel and special interest community ambassador groups, these were children aged between 11 and 16 and with lived experience of racism who volunteered to join the CYP (Children and Young Person's) steering group. They informed the research process and guided how the Commissioner engaged with children across Wales throughout this work.

The principal method we used to hear the views of children and young people was focus group interviews. We recruited to these focus groups via our Ambassador Schools network, and via targeted contact via online leaflets to schools and community groups in specific geographic areas. Participation was voluntary, and we offered sessions online or in person, although most groups opted for in person focus groups. All sessions used the pre-agreed 10 questions which had been co-produced with the CYP Steering group as a framework to gather views.

In total, we engaged with 170 ethnically diverse children from all four regions of Wales through a total of 14 focus groups, including 13 in person sessions and 1 online session.

All sessions were facilitated by two members of staff from the participation team of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, and supported by staff and/or volunteers from the 'host' organisation/ school or youth group. Children discussed the questions with the facilitators and their peers and recorded their answers on post it notes which they stuck onto the question sheet collected by facilitators. Children also had access to a 'safe envelope' where they could share their private thoughts, wishes and feelings with the Children Commissioner. Verbal feedback and comments were collected and later transcribed by CCfW staff to be analysed by the CYP Steering Group.

Teacher and Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders, including school leaders and community representatives, were initially invited to take part in a roundtable discussion. This engagement process provided initial insight and guidance to inform the specific questions which would be asked during the interview process.

We aimed to gather the views and experiences of teachers around the topic of racism and racist incidents in schools. The principal method we employed for this was one-to-one online interviews. In order to recruit teachers and educators to take part in the interviews, we wrote to all Local Authority Education Leads and secondary schools, as well as schools who take part in our children's rights scheme. We also used school visits and events to speak to teachers about the research and invite their participation.

We held face-to-face interviews with school leaders and teachers from ten secondary schools across eight local authorities. We also ran a survey which was completed by twelve educators across six local authorities.



06 WHAT WE HEARD FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We spoke to a total of 170 children through 14 focus groups conducted with children from across Wales including North Wales, West Wales, South West and South East Wales. This is what we heard from them.

Understanding of Racism

Across all the focus groups, children had a clear understanding of racism as being discrimination towards a specific group of people due to race, colour, religion or culture, and being negative. They added that they often hear racial slurs and people 'making fun of someone's skin colour', or being singled out due to their skin colour and heritage.

Children shared their perception of racism as a deeply rooted and widespread issue and wanted schools to consider how they could respond not only to racism taking place within schools, but also that which happens outside of school, including at home and online, but which also has an impact on the child's school life.

When asked what they hoped for, children stated that they want equality.

"I want everyone to look past people's background and culture and think positively about it"

Children in the Vale of Glamorgan



Experiences of Racism in Schools

Children had mixed responses to sharing their lived experiences of racism, and some stated that they had not witnessed or experienced racism, or had, but did not feel comfortable sharing. We emphasized that children were not compelled to share, and shared information with children and adult staff on sources of follow up support.

Despite this, we heard a range of concerning examples and experiences of racism from the children we spoke to, with children from every part of Wales speaking about the normalisation of racist language and the 'everyday' nature of racist experiences, together with these incidents not being taken seriously or addressed, or leading to the victims themselves being punished for their response to it.

Below are experiences that children shared, broken down by area:

In South East Wales:

A common theme was around racist remarks happening on a regular basis but remarks also 'being normalized' by students. Many students stated that they felt that racism is often passed off as 'banter'.

One group shared that they experienced a very racist incident with another school in the area, this started on a 'WhatsApp' group with racist messages – using slurs such as 'terrorist' and 'Nazi', but then escalated and police were contacted. The students felt that school management did not take it seriously.

Some young Muslim girls who wore the headscarf reported receiving comments such as 'you're hiding a bomb in your scarf' which for them feel so normalised that these are not reported. We heard one example of a student who was suspended for saying the 'N-word' however he returned to school the following day and it seemed to the young people we interviewed that nothing was addressed. Another incident shared included a girl's hijab being pulled off and left her crying, which students reported that the school didn't take seriously. Some students added that they have been called 'terrorist' but have not reported this to anyone, despite it hurting their feelings.

One young person shared that sometimes well intentioned teachers may say 'we all originated from Africa' but this leads to other students saying the 'N – word'. Young people also told us about teachers and staff having been involved in using poor, possibly racist language e.g., one teacher said 'stop monkeying around' to a group of Black boys, and even using slurs such as the 'P slur'. One young person shared that a teacher made a 'joke' about some of the non-white boys being from the 'ghetto.'

Others spoke about the use of religious or cultural language which has been turned it into slang or something that is ridiculed such as 'wallahi' – (which means 'by god' or 'I swear to god' in Arabic). The students said this makes it hard to report or challenge as they are seen as just being difficult.

Students shared that sometimes they make 'inside' jokes with other ethnic minority students to normalize what they are experiencing or just speak to their friends to get it off their chest. Some shared that they have tried to reclaim words or racist stereotypes, for example one young person stated that they would say 'yeah, I eat dogs' to take the power away from other students who make these remarks.

Students stated that they report racist bullying and incidents to a trusted teacher, however they were unsure what happens next, or what the next steps are behind the scenes. Other students added that when you report racism the school 'just forgets about it'. The students felt that only incidents of racism with physical violence get attention – this is often taken seriously, but then added that any physical violence results in a suspension, but they are not aware of what happens to someone when they are racist.

One group of children shared that a boy in their class is Indian and lots of people in their class were using micro aggressions such as talking in an Indian accent. The children described the people who were doing this as Black, and said their teacher did tell the boys off and gave detention but they were concerned about the impact this had on the boy who was hurt. They shared concerns that the teacher may not understand the cultural differences and histories of the culture as they come from a White background. Others added that the school often deals with physical violence really well, but verbal micro aggressions are less well understood and responded to.

We heard from some that social media plays a big part in making racism 'funny.' A lot of racist tiktok videos are shared, and others had received snapchat videos of people using the 'N slur'.

Another student shared that they think parents and carers are using racist language at home and the children are copying this. Others added that sometimes students are being racist but don't think they are – so more education is needed.

In South West Wales:

At one school focus group, children stated that they hear the N slur regularly and in a way which is almost normalised in school. They added that a girl they know regularly experiences racism from her friends, such as calling her the 'N word' but as they are the popular students, she feels that she can't do anything and 'just laughs' with it. One group reported that some pupils had intimidated and teased another pupil because of her skin colour, but she didn't want to report it. 'My friend puts up with racist abuse from a group of popular pupils in her class because she wants to fit in. She is being called a monkey and a cotton picker'. One young person shared that his friend often uses the N word but he is unsure what to do when this happens.

A group which had predominantly White Welsh participants shared that they have not directly experienced racism but have witnessed it, the majority on a daily basis. This included racist slurs in the corridor and people laughing it off, and people using a racial slur whilst talking about Asian-heritage boys on a daily basis. One child said about these – **"None of these incidents got reported apart from one. It's all brushed under the carpet"**.

"A boy in my class dropped a piece of cotton from his coat and asked a year 10 Black boy to pick it up. They had a fight after" The child was unsure what happened to either of them after, however the group spoke about how the ethnic minority student often has to defend themselves and then they get the blame for it.

One student shared that **"I was called a 'monkey' by a student. Other students reported it and parents were contacted but she [the student who called her the name] started crying so I didn't want to make a fuss."**

Child in Pembrokeshire

Many students also referred to religious racism, particularly Islamophobia. Some students shared that schools used to not allow headscarves and felt that this was racist. Others spoke about inconsistencies in when they would be allowed to do religious activities.

"My teacher wouldn't let me use the toilet to do ablution/wudu which is needed for prayer. Many other people in my school have had the same issue. This felt racist to me, as he let other students use the toilet at any time"

Child in Swansea

In Mid Wales:

Children shared that the N slur is the most common slur they hear. Some added that racism is so normalized and casual that they don't even notice it. Many spoke about feeling it has become more acceptable in recent years.

One participant mentioned that her friend was called names because of her skin colour and she felt very bad for her and didn't know how to best support her friend as she had never experienced anything like it.

"My friend who has a darker skin tone than me was bullied a lot, people would call her the N word. It was very upsetting, I didn't know how to help her."

Child in Powys

An incident many recalled included a student in geography class looking at a map of Niger and laughing saying the N word. They were told off but kept doing it.

A Polish student shared that she was told to 'go back to your country' in school and she reported it and had to make a statement. She added that the process was very upsetting and does not feel as though the issue has been dealt with.

Others shared that during year 6 transition day to high school, they noticed an increase in racist slurs and name calling. This was 'egged on' by older students in High school. They knew they were being racist to others but had not reported as felt nothing would happen. One participant had a direct experience of racism by a fellow student, being called "black monkey". Some students were also said to be encouraging racism and asking other students to use racial slurs.

"Someone said they didn't want me to sit next to them because of my skin colour. I just moved away"

Child in Powys

In North Wales:

Children shared examples of being called racial slurs, of being 'pushed and shoved' and when this happens in school, 'usually the person harming gets detention'. However, students also described how they are often told just to ignore these incidents and no further action is taken. One incident of rocks and stones being thrown at students was also disclosed.

We also heard examples of ongoing racist bullying happening outside of school or on the way home from school, with students having to leave school early to avoid being followed home. These children described feeling sad and scared about the situation – **"Sometimes they are nice but other times people call you names"**.

We heard from some students from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds, who shared their specific experiences:

"It makes you feel mad. I will try to stop them. It's not just in school, its kids and adults. They drive past the site and shout P**. The police don't care. People banging on my door. I don't know what they (teachers/ police) can do, there's lots of bad people outside."**

Child in Wrexham

The students described many things as 'annoying'. **"They are always swearing at me and pushing me, it's making me very sad"**. They reported this to a teacher and they were told to just ignore it. They said it 'happens all of the time'.

The student added that depending on the type of relationship they had with the person they would have different responses, for example they might try to address it with their friends – calling it out. However, they also added that sometimes they go along with racist 'jokes' as it is quite normalized.

Barriers to reporting racism

Across Wales, children highlighted a range of barriers to reporting racism, from lack of awareness of reporting processes, a sense of racism not being taken seriously, fear of escalation and retaliation, and embarrassment and stigma. A major barrier is also the normalisation of perhaps more 'casual' racism, and the view of it as a normal, everyday occurrence.



The majority of children we spoke to across Wales stated that they were unsure of how their school deals with racism, both how to report and what happens after reporting. Only those who had reported racism were able to share the process of reporting in their school. Some children shared that they were aware that parents can also report racist incidences but were unsure what would happen afterwards.

Additionally, children shared that the lack of clarity surrounding reporting and barriers to reporting impact how those who have experienced racism feel about their school and the level of trust they have here.

Children also shared that having to speak to either a teacher or someone in pastoral care about an experience of racism is quite difficult especially as they don't know what will happen next. The students shared that they wanted the school to make sure students are aware of who they can talk to and turn to if they are experiencing racism.

Some children shared that they may not report due to fears of not being taken seriously or that it will be 'brushed under the carpet.' Some reported that teachers often tell them to 'ignore it, get a grip, it's just a joke' - it gets dismissed and then nothing will happen.

Overall, most children stated that very few report racism to teachers as there is a widespread feeling that very little is done when they do so. The biggest action children wanted to see taken is for teachers to 'stop ignoring racism.'

"No one really reports as nothing gets done."

Child in Swansea

“School is stricter about school uniform than dealing with racism.”

Child in Wrexham

“The school tells us that they take racism seriously and if you participate [in racism] you will be excluded but there has been many incidents and nothing has happened.”

Child in Cardiff

Many also spoke about being worried about the person who was racist doing something worse or retaliating. The fear of being bullied even more, and not being able to report anonymously was highlighted as something which prevents reporting by all focus groups across Wales.

“When you make witness statements you have to name everyone who saw it happen, this makes me not want to tell anyone, as they will hate me.”

Child in Cardiff

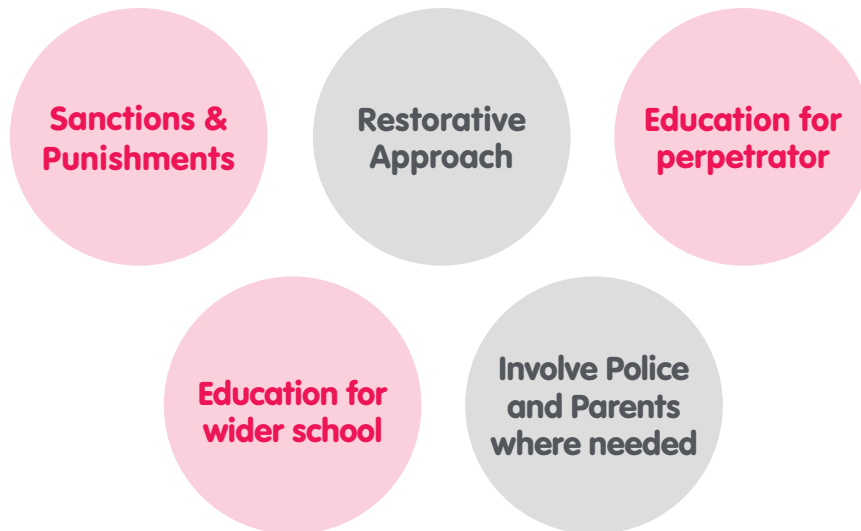
Children added that for racist incidences to be taken seriously they have to make a big ‘fuss’ about them. They also stated that often the abuse or bullying was verbal, however teachers would only take incidents involving physical abuse seriously.

A Polish student shared that teachers don’t do anything if you are White – they said that teachers don’t take it seriously if a White student is racist to a white student.

Students added that sometimes families (parents, aunts, cousins, grandparents etc.) had experienced very bad physical racism in their youth, and in comparison their own experiences did not seem so serious. Children shared that this may prevent students from telling the adults in the home.

Children often spoke about the difficulty of reporting for fear of being thought of as a ‘snitch’ or a ‘grass’. One young person shared that from their own personal experience they felt embarrassment, and this has stopped them from wanting to report in the future.

Suggestions from learners for dealing with racism



We asked children and young people how they think racism should be dealt with by schools.

Clarity & Transparency

An overwhelming message was about the need for more clarity and transparency over how to report, what happens when racist incidents are reported, and what those reporting it can expect. Children across Wales spoke about the importance of 'actually taking action' to deal with racism

Many students spoke about not really being aware of what happened to those who were racist, but their understanding was that these students might just be spoken to, or they might be suspended for a day but then they come back and 'nothing really changes.'

"I don't really know – they would call us over and tell us that racism is wrong BUT I don't know what happens after. They never taught us about it."

Child in Swansea

Some children spoke about the need for a more consistent response which may include restorative justice, education or punishment through the schools disciplinary systems. This to them would show that the school has a zero tolerance to racism.

"In my school, perpetrators have to go to 'rehab' where they fill out the equality booklet. I don't know how seriously they take this."

Child in Pembrokeshire

"I have reported racism, it was dealt with by teachers talking to them but it hasn't stopped anything. They still make the same comments towards me, I don't think enough was done."

Child in Powys

"You have to go to the hub and make a statement and teachers deal with it. Also, isolation is used... But these are not working, it doesn't feel like a punishment."

Child in Powys

However, some children also recognised the limitations of punitive approaches:

Sanctions & Punishments

Dealing with perpetrators²⁶ of racism more effectively was a key theme across our conversations with children and young people who spoke about the importance of appropriate sanctions and punishment, combined with restorative approaches, as well as education for the perpetrator and the wider school.

Children spoke about their desire to see 'real punishment for participating in racism'. Some children suggested that every incident of racism should be formally recorded, rather than a verbal warning, and that disciplinary action should always be taken which should go on their school record.

Many children wanted to see teachers taking racism more seriously, and to demonstrate this through stronger and more robust punishment for racism including isolation, suspension and exclusion.

"There is not really a proper way to deal with it - bullies don't care about punishments, so it just keeps happening."

Child in Powys

Restorative Justice

Some children suggested they would like to see a restorative justice approach which they described as an initial meeting with the person that was hurt and then the person that participated in racism. They added that it was important that all actions that are agreed or taken are then shared with the person that was harmed.

Children highlighted that they also wish to see more educational opportunities for the students who are being racist.

“My school has a rehab where if you use slurs you learn the history about the word and why it’s hurtful.”

Child in Swansea

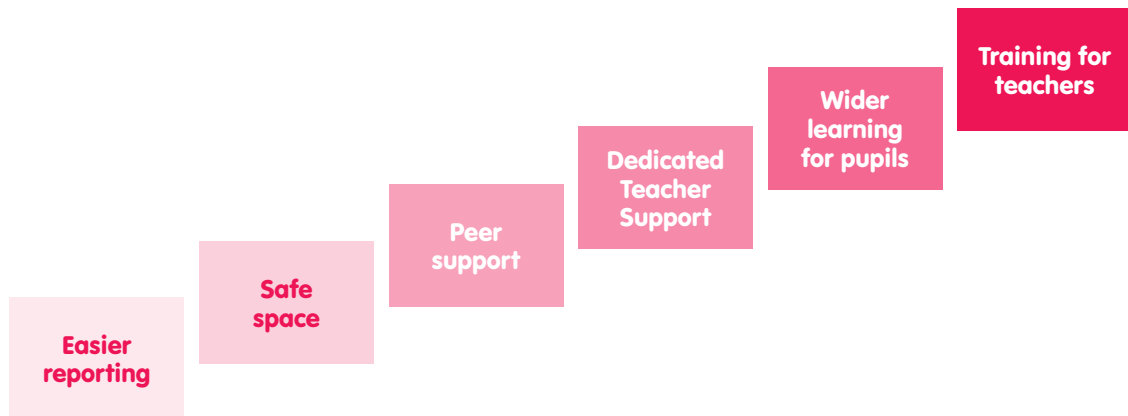
Children also stated that they would like teachers to explore where students are learning these racist thoughts in order to re-educate them.

Children added that schools often hold assemblies to talk about racism and why it is wrong following a racist incident but some children felt that ‘nobody takes these seriously.’ Others added that it depends on how students feel about a topic, students who may already be interested may enjoy it, however one child stated that these “probably won’t make a difference to those who participate in racist behaviour – they will continue regardless.”

Involvement of external agencies

Some children and young people commented that schools should work more closely with social services, police and community groups to prevent and deal with racist incidents. Some children said that they would like teachers to explain to students what would happen if the same behaviour occurred outside of school and how this is a hate crime and illegal. Some said they would also like police to be involved when needed, however others said that it is scary when police get involved. Some children who were from Gypsy Roma and Traveller backgrounds stated that the potential involvement of the police would make them not want to report.

Better support for students experiencing racism



Children had some clear messages and suggestions for how schools could support students who were experiencing racism.

These centred on making it easier to and more clear how to report racism, providing a supportive safe space for those who had experienced and reported it, as well as offering peer-based support, and dedicated teachers to support the process.

"I feel that they should put posters around the school explaining what would happen when you report if you have experienced a situation with racism."

Child, Pembrokeshire

Crucially, there was said to be a need to keep young people who had reported racism updated on what was happening as a result of their report, and to ensure that their wider mental health and wellbeing was well supported.

More broadly, suggestions were made about the importance of ensuring sufficient learning opportunities for pupils about racism and diverse cultures, as well more training on the topic for teachers.

Many alluded to the need to be clearer about the reporting process and what happens after reporting. Some children stated that they do not like to report racist incidents as they feel that this escalates the situation, but suggested that they might consider doing so if they could be more involved with what happens after reporting. There was a clear need to communicate that teachers will take it seriously – investigating immediately and letting the student know what is happening.

"People don't want to report because they don't think anything will happen. If they don't know actions are being taken or haven't been updated, that can impact on people wanting to report. They just get told 'it's been dealt with' and that's it."

Child, Wrexham

In terms of making it easier to report racism, there was consensus that embarrassment was a key barrier, and therefore children suggested that even though being kept informed after reporting racism would be ideal, there should be also be an option for anonymous reporting, for example using anonymous reporting boxes, which should be monitored regularly. Children also suggested exploring online options for this such as use of Google forms or QR codes (although restricted mobile phone use was recognised to be a barrier to this way of reporting). Others suggested using different forms or apps in use by some schools where you can message teachers more directly.

A safe space

In nearly every group, children made the suggestion of offering a safe space where anyone can go if something has happened to them, and where students can access people who have been trained to respond to racism. This would be a place for them to 'calm down' to 'chill out', and to 'explore your emotions'.

"It should be like a quiet room, where students can call their parents or just relax if they want some quiet time."

Child, Mid-Wales

Key/Dedicated teacher

Many also suggested having a dedicated and trained teacher who deals with these issues, and who students can go to, talk to and get advice. The importance of having someone to talk to, a trusted adult and member of the pastoral support team was key. This point was supported by examples both good and bad where the teacher response was crucial to what happened next and to how both the victim and perpetrator of racism were supported. The students added that *"we know there are trusted staff members that can help but this is quite a small number, as only certain teachers would 'do something about it'."* It was also added that it was important that teachers maintained confidentiality about who reported to them, but this often didn't happen.

Some children suggested that schools could create a 'Head of Diversity' who responds to these incidents and support young people with them. Others suggested that Welsh Government should create an outline or criteria for schools on how to deal with racist incidents. This could include creating a teacher role who solely deals with racist incidents.

Peer Support

Some children also referenced that having support from peers your own age can also be very important. We heard of some positive examples of schools which had diversity committees or pupil support groups – which act as *"a creative and support group to discuss what has happened in a safe nice way"*. However it was also noted that these groups where they did exist needed to ensure that they were also inclusive of all cultures and other identities including LGBTQ+ identities.

Family

Some suggested involving parents from the beginning as soon as a racist incident is reported, and this should involve the parents of the victim as well as the perpetrator. However others felt that this may also put children off reporting, if they feel that a huge fuss would be made. It was generally agreed that it was important that the school response was proportionate to the incident, but that it may be difficult to get consensus on this from the outset of an incident.

'Random check ins'

As well as improving reporting systems, some children also recommended a 'random' check in' to gauge what is happening for students – where they are able to capture racism happening in schools.

Wider learning about racism and diversity

Children highlighted that as well as providing direct support to those experiencing racism, a way of helping all pupils who may experience racism, and preventing racist incidents, was to offer regular wider learning opportunities for pupils to learn about racism.

Suggestions included:

- Having more lessons about racism to stop it happening in the first place
- Learning about racism and how it has changed over time e.g. within RE and History when these subjects are compulsory
- Learn about different cultures through 'culture days'
- Utilise form time to discuss culture, diversity and inclusion together in a safe way
- After an incident occurs, for schools to deliver an assembly, educating students why what happened was so harmful
- For schools to normalize talking openly and positively about culture, race and religion, and also what people perceive racism to be. This will help people share experiences on racism to teachers
- More posters around the school talking about racism and why it's wrong
- Organisations like EYST and Show Racism the Red Card coming in to share what support is available and explain what racism is
- Normalise talking about different races and celebrate it
- We could have our own anti-racism day – doing different workshops and activities.

Celebrating diversity in Schools

A common theme was about the importance of celebrating diversity within schools, which children told us happened in different ways including through school assemblies, or 'culture days'.

In many of the focus groups across Wales, children shared positive examples of these culture days, where they could share and celebrate diverse cultures, included through students wearing cultural clothing and tasting food. The children emphasised that sharing was important and helped start conversations about different cultures, race and religions.

We heard many examples of classes where students were encouraged to share their heritage with their classmates, and there were a range of responses to this practice. We heard that, often students from ethnic minority backgrounds are asked to teach other students about their heritage both by other students and teachers, and some shared how they had been asked in the past to create resources for the school. Some enjoyed being asked to share, and felt as this made them feel they were a part of the community.

"Me and my friends delivered a presentation to our school about assembly. I enjoyed working with my friends and was happy to share."

Child in Pembrokeshire

However, some children stated that they felt they had to defend their culture or religion or be experts and felt that too much pressure was put on them. Some students told us they felt as though they are put under a spotlight, and are fearful of sharing their culture.

"I have to always represent my culture. I can't do anything wrong."

Child in Wrexham

"A problem with PSE and educational programmes is that people don't enjoy them and don't really take them seriously, they feel less official than regular lessons. Education on racism would need to feel important (like English or science lessons) for people to feel more engaged."

Child in Cardiff

Diversity in the Curriculum

Children stated that they have lessons focused on diversity and equality, however students do not always take these seriously. One comment was that teachers 'brush over these lessons and they are not very engaging or fun.'

'Equality and diversity is not taught properly, it is mainly learned through books and an occasional assembly, and we don't really see the long term effects of this as solving racism.'

Child in Swansea

Others shared that their school have blocked out times to explore topical issues including the Windrush generation, Black History Month, Eid, and Diwali. Some felt they only discuss racial diversity during Black History Month but "lessons are boring and not much effort is put into it." Some children shared that 'although teachers decide what we learn', they do take suggestions from pupils.

Other focus groups highlighted that health and wellbeing lessons are often utilised to learn topical issues but these are not seen as useful if they are not interactive if 'teachers only read a PowerPoint', with not enough opportunity to ask questions. Others stated that some workshops can be 'awkward or outdated because of lack of teacher knowledge.'

A focus group held in Powys shared that their school had created anti-racist posters profiling key activists and held a poster competition within their school. They stated that they enjoyed this activity as they were able to undertake research themselves and use creative means to share their knowledge.

Some children stated that schools do not give enough opportunities to learn about religious diversity.

"My teacher had to 'fight' to run an assembly about Eid"

Child in Swansea

“Staff are trying to be supportive and want to involve children but they do lack knowledge and tend to only focus on racism related to skin colour, ignoring that racism is also about religion.”

Children in Swansea

“My school offers two students a trip to Auschwitz Concentration Camp to learn more about the Holocaust. This is great but I want to see more opportunities to learn about different communities’ history.”

Child in Bridgend

One group of children shared that in history lessons they learn about Martin Luther King and Anne Frank but it’s always seen as ‘history’ and not something that is relevant now. Others added that the way they learn about it gives the impression that racism is ‘solved’ now, but they know this is not the case. They shared that ‘Black Lives Matter’ have highlighted that racism in Wales is happening now’.

Others raised concerns about the texts they are reading in English. Many children shared that their GCSE text is ‘Of Mice and Men.’ They described how uncomfortable they felt reading racist slurs. One focus group of students shared that they tried to change the text in school but had been unable to. Children from ethnically minority backgrounds shared that they disliked reading the book as they felt that their peers then became more comfortable with using these slurs.

Visits

Many children suggested that being given information is key but also wanted more practical lessons and visits to local religious and culturally important buildings and museums. They also wanted schools to invite charities and leaders to speak to pupils so they could hear their lived experience to make these topics more ‘real’. They added that they felt they had missed a lot of these opportunities due to Covid-19 lockdown measures. They stressed that they were excited about learning about these topics in school but did not have enough opportunity to do so. Some spoke about relevant trips to learn about diverse histories, but emphasised the need to ensure this about different communities, and offered to all students.

“The diversity committee wanted to arrange a whole school trip to Cardiff Museum as there was a Welsh Black Lives Matter exhibition, but the school only offered this to the diversity committee. We didn’t really need this, it would have been better for all the students. It felt as though this was a missed opportunity, as the wider school would have benefited more.”

Child in Vale of Glamorgan

Teachers' own understanding of diversity

Children frequently spoke about the need for more training for teachers and said they wanted better training for teachers and head teachers, in particular, anti-racism training. They also spoke of the need to educate teachers and school staff so they know about different cultures and can then empathize more with victims of racism.

Children stated that they would like to see more ethnically diverse teachers, who would better understand diverse ethnic cultures as well as relating more to their experiences of racism.

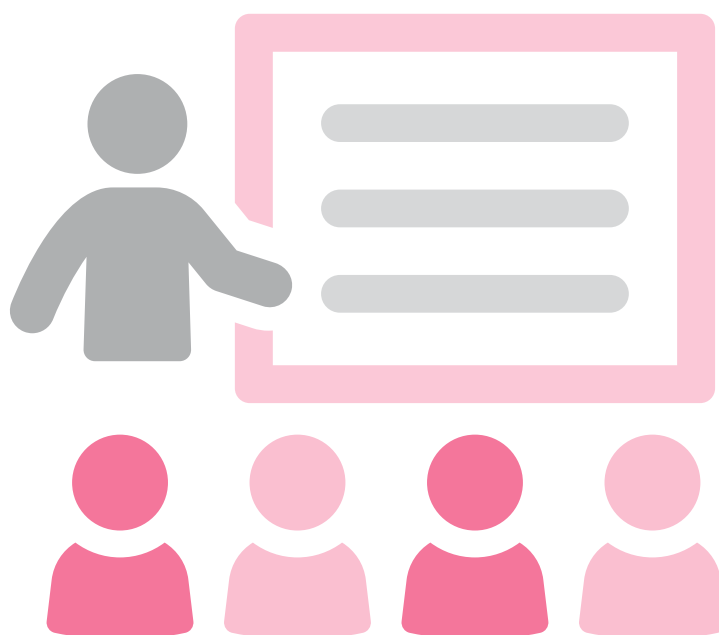
A focus group in Pembrokeshire shared that once a week, the students focus on different areas of diversity, including protected characteristics. However, usually this is via a pre-made work-book and PowerPoint based lessons. The students raised that knowledge and confidence gained in talking about these topics vary depending on how knowledgeable teachers are about these. They gave examples of teachers who they did find engaging when talking about different cultures and races, who usually used films and songs as part of their lessons, which helped the students to feel engaged in the lessons.

Overall, children in our focus groups shared that teaching staff do try to be inclusive. A good practise example that children in Pembrokeshire shared is a 'time out card' which can be used for a break for students fasting during Ramadan. The children were very appreciative of this but found some inconsistencies with how the card was used by different teachers.

Regional Differences

Different regions can be seen as having distinct needs in relation to the teaching of diversity. Children in Mid Wales flagged up that they are aware that they do not live in a very diverse area, which is why they highlighted they wanted to have more ways to learn about different communities. It is notable that children were alert to the fact that ethnic minority children in areas of low ethnic diversity may be even more isolated and experience racism more acutely due to being 'the only one'.

In comparison children in Swansea, Bridgend and Cardiff emphasised that teachers do not know how to deal with racism between ethnic minority communities. They wanted to see teachers be upskilled in this area.



07 WHAT WE HEARD FROM SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHERS

We held face-to-face interviews with school leaders and teachers from ten secondary schools across eight local authorities. We also ran a survey which was completed by twelve educators across six local authorities.

Understanding and defining racism

There was no consistent answer in how schools understand and define racism or a racist incident, and there was general recognition that achieving a single or shared definition was a challenge. Some schools defined a racist incident as an incident that any member of the school community perceives to be racist, whereas some offered different definitions including 'discrimination due to race, religion or nationality', 'discrimination or inappropriate behaviour against another member of school' or 'any comment that has a racial undertone'.

One school leader explained that their school's approach had changed over time, and that the focus has changed from what staff deem to be racist to what the child deems to be racist. One school leader said that while staff understand the significance of racial slurs, more subtle forms of racism can often be missed.

Recording incidents

Schools used different systems to record racist incidents, including My Concern and SIMS. The detail of how these recording systems are used by staff was not a specific focus of our research, but school leaders' answers suggested different approaches in different schools. For instance, one school told us that currently only heads of year and safeguarding leads have access to My Concern, meaning that they are the only members of staff able to record incidents. They said that from September 2023 they are changing this approach, and all staff (including non-teaching staff) will be able to access it and record incidents. This whole-staff approach in recording incidents was used in another school we interviewed.

One school said they track incidents as 'alleged or confirmed' before investigating further and deciding on next steps. Another school said that any racist slur or gesture is recorded and dealt with as a racist incident, regardless of how the incident has been perceived by the victim.

Existing Guidance

School leaders had a broad range of views on the quality and clarity of existing Welsh Government guidance to help them deal with racist incidents, the main one currently being 'Rights, Respect & Equality'²⁷, the Welsh Government's anti-bullying guidance.

Some had a positive view on existing guidance, welcoming the specific mention of protected characteristics within the anti-bullying guidance. Others called for more clarity, guidance that is more practical, and more specific guidance related to an anti-racist culture. One school leader described the existing guidance as 'not joined up and very vague', explaining their view that 'the lack of national picture' and 'lack of sharing of best practice' impacts how effectively schools can manage racism.

Some schools talked about the strength of school-led policies that involve the school community, allowing approaches to be developed and owned by staff and pupils.

One teacher referenced the Welsh Government's anti-racist action plan²⁸, saying that it was a very helpful document, however they were concerned that they believed they were the only member of staff in the school to have read it.

Experience of racist incidents

Most schools who described the nature of typical racist incidents in their school talked about racist language and racist comments made between pupils.

Some school leaders suggested that pupils' understanding of what constitutes racist behaviour is low, often citing a lack of awareness of the meaning and historical context of certain words.

One teacher said that their school had noticed a pattern of racism towards girls. This was not because the school had more girls than boys from ethnic minorities, but that the racism was intertwined with misogyny.

Reporting of racism

Some schools talked about the importance of empowering pupils to share their experiences and to feel confident in reporting incidents, while also acknowledging the barriers.

A particular issue highlighted was one related to the experience of pupils in schools with low ethnic diversity. One teacher said that having a low number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds in the school influences pupils' willingness to report incidents. They said that ethnic minority pupils experiencing racism don't want to draw more attention to themselves and don't want any 'fuss', and that it can take reassurance from staff to help them realise that they are not 'making a fuss' by reporting a racist incident.

Another school said that pupils can feel reluctant to report incidents because they don't want 'problems to worsen'.

Another teacher told us that older pupils in the school have raised racist incidents that happened in the past, which they didn't report at the time because they weren't as comfortable raising the issue with teachers. The teacher also felt that this low confidence in reporting incidents was a possible reason for the school's low number of recorded incidents.

Dealing with incidents

Most schools talked very positively about educating perpetrators within a restorative approach, alongside any other sanctions and approaches, including exclusions and a multi-agency response, depending on the severity of the incident.

Some schools said they deal with racism as a safeguarding incident, which 'acknowledges the harm' involved and elevates the school's response.

Communication with victims, perpetrators, and parents/carers

The importance of clear communication with those involved in the incident was highlighted by some schools. This meant making sure the victim was kept informed throughout the process and co-ordinating conversations with both sets of families.

An example approach by a secondary school

A letter is sent to the parents of the perpetrator to say there has been an incident, and that the child has been given a compulsory learning opportunity to learn about the harm of prejudice and racism, and how this behaviour can cause distress.

Contract with pupils

The child is then sent a 'contract' that allows them to reflect on the incident and to consider what actions they can take next. This document is then signed, and becomes an agreement between staff and the pupil agreeing that they will be knowingly committing a racist action if they behave in that way again. If there is a second incident, they meet with a police officer.

Voice of victim

A letter is sent to the family of the victim to update them, and to ask if they're happy with the actions they're taking. The victim decides if they want mediation or not.

Teacher confidence

Very few discussions suggested teachers are confident in dealing with racist incidents. Comments included teachers being worried about 'saying the wrong thing' and being 'uncomfortable about the topic'. One school leader said that while teachers have the right intentions, they can be uncomfortable talking about race, which can result in 'smoothing over' incidents. They said that this causes harm by normalising experiences of racism and creating barriers in reporting.

We also heard how teachers can be worried about 'singling out' pupils in discussions about racism. For instance, where a school has a low level of diversity and might have one pupil in a class from an ethnic minority, some described not wanting to make them feel uncomfortable by discussing racism or the history of specific communities.

Some were more positive, suggesting that their schools' focus on the issue in recent years has resulted in growing teacher confidence. One school leader said that teachers were fully confident in dealing with incidents, and that having a system underpinned by strong leadership and an ethos of reporting every incident even if they are unsure has helped.

Training and support

The need for more training, support, and resources was a common feature in our interviews with school leaders and teachers. One school leader told us that they had never had specific training on racism, despite teaching for 27 years. Similarly, other school leaders and teachers said they had received very few or no training opportunities. But we did hear about ongoing anti-racism training in one local authority offered to school leaders.

With the 'onus' on schools to find training, some raised the cost of external training as a barrier, particularly in the context of restricted budgets, and one school leader said funding should be ring-fenced for training opportunities. One school leader felt that 'legislation has led the response to this area without training or learning, unlike other pastoral issues.'

National consistency could be greater if there was a schools' training programme run by the Welsh Government, according to one school leader. They said that 'people are on all different levels' and that 'some schools are doing nothing' while other schools are 'doing loads', and that there should be training that everyone receives.

Some mentioned specific issues that training and resources could target, including the language that teachers should use in dealing with racist incidents. One school suggested 'a one page summary produced by the Welsh Government' on this issue.

Others pointed to the need for additional classroom resources to help teach about anti-racism, an approved list of texts to use in class that teachers can have full confidence in, and more opportunities to share and become aware of good practice examples from other schools.

Outside of fixed training opportunities and resources, one school leader suggested more fluid support in the form of 'sounding boards' within the local authority, and another school suggested an 'an anti-racism 'lead' employed by the local education authority to support schools with racism and racist incidents'. One school felt that being able to refer children to agencies would be helpful when they have displayed deeply racist or hateful behaviour.

One school said they need 'regular support' as opposed to new policies and guidance and an expectation that schools effectively adopt them.

Schools who mentioned involvement and engagement in DARPL (Diversity and Anti-racism Professional Learning)²⁹ training were generally very positive about their experiences. One school leader said it had 'truly led to the change', and that the training has affected them, and given them the opportunity to hear from lived experience to make change. One said it was not clear where to find information to support anti-racism work, outside of DARPL.

Challenges in cultural change

We heard that having limited time to drive cultural change in the school is an issue, and that doing this can often rely on the passion of individual members of staff.

One teacher we spoke to was asked to audit the level of confidence among her peers across different departments and identity gaps in anti-racism practice, but was not given any additional time to do this. They felt like not having proper time to dedicate to this task was holding them back. The teacher was asked to do this work in the context of their new role in the school as Head of equality and diversity. But despite having this new role, the teacher had to fit the duties around an existing teaching schedule. They felt that it sent a poor message about where the role and the work sits on the school's priority list.

One school leader said that anti-racism can currently feel like a 'tick-box' exercise, and that proper implementation of an anti-racist culture in schools relies on school leaders who are invested in the issue.

Some schools talked about the influence of a child's home or community as a challenge in creating a change of school culture. One school leader felt that 'work is needed with families' to teach them about racism, and another said that parents' beliefs are 'very hard to challenge'. Another said that the school can do lots of work on anti-racism, but 'if parents are not supportive on making changes they are battling the tide'.

Staff and school governor ethnicity

Some schools said that a lack of ethnic diversity in school staff and governors contributes to a 'gap' in understanding children's lived experiences, and affects how teachers recognise racism and create an anti-racist environment. One school leader said that children feel more comfortable in reporting racist behaviour 'to people who look like them'.

One school leader said they were considering altering the wording of job adverts, with advice from DARPL, to achieve greater staff diversity.

A small number of schools questioned to what extent a lack of ethnic diversity should affect practice. One school leader said the school should have an inclusive ethos regardless of staff ethnicity, and another said that 'diversity should be at the forefront regardless of the makeup of the body'.

Some schools talked proactively about trying to get more diverse governing bodies, highlighting the need for a diverse range of voices, including from parents.

Another school felt that establishing partnerships with more ethnically diverse schools might help them to feel 'more equipped' with dealing with racism and racist bullying.

The curriculum's role in making an anti-racist environment

School leaders and teachers placed importance on the role of the school's curriculum in creating an anti-racist environment.

One school leader said the curriculum change has 'had a massive impact', allowing schools to embed diversity as a theme running through different lessons. For instance, a child might learn about how Wales became ethnically diverse in a history lesson, and then use this learning in a media studies class to make a creative piece exploring the issue. Schools also mentioned that pupils were able to complete specific equality and diversity qualifications.

We also heard how some schools had worked with members of their local communities, for instance local artists, to tell their stories to pupils and to help them explore cultural diversity.

Choosing effective and suitable texts was also an important factor for schools. Many mentioned how specific texts helped pupils to explore the issue and to celebrate differences.

Some schools noted that it is easier to be flexible with materials and learning in Key Stage 3, and that it becomes harder at Key Stage 4 because of the limited number of exam materials and options.

The 1937 novel *Of Mice and Men* was the most frequently discussed text in our research interviews. Some school leaders and teachers said they had considered the appropriateness of this specific text in the classroom, particularly because of its use of racial slurs and their impact on young people, especially from ethnic minorities. For some schools the internal debate on the text and in some cases consultation with pupils has resulted in them ceasing to teach it as part of the GCSE curriculum.

Schools also described barriers to dropping the text. As a long-standing and short text that teachers are very familiar with, we heard that *Of Mice and Men* is relatively easy to teach and one where they are confident pupils will achieve good marks. Teacher workload was mentioned as a factor in this context. Other options given by the WJEC were not viewed as favourably in terms of ease and efficiency of teaching. One teacher's view was that they had seen the positive impact of the WJEC's work in diversifying some areas of learning, but that English was 'not really getting there.'

Increases in reporting

One school leader told us that effective anti-racism work in the school has resulted in a doubling of recorded racist incidents. Their view was that the actual number of incidents was unlikely to have significantly changed, but that they were seeing the benefits of an increase in staff confidence in dealing with incidents and pupil confidence in reporting them.

Similarly, a teacher told us how variations in teacher confidence across their school were potentially contributing to different rates of reporting. They said that where heads of year were confident and vocal in challenging racism and being seen to tackle incidents effectively, reporting was high, suggesting pupils had more confidence in the process. Other heads of year were not as outwardly confident in approaching issues and incidents, and reporting in those year groups was lower.

Estyn's role

Some schools discussed Estyn's role in this context.

One school leader felt there was a risk that with increased reporting, Estyn could label the school as one with a 'racist issue', despite increased reporting pointing to students feeling more confident and comfortable in telling their teachers about incidents.

Another school leader felt that Estyn should do more to emphasise the importance of school culture and help schools to 'prioritise the right things'.

Another teacher wanted 'more accountability' for schools on this issue; it was unclear to them how this issue would be covered in inspections. They felt that unless it was covered properly there was a risk that it could be ignored as an issue.

08 WHAT WE HEARD FROM KEY ADULT STAKEHOLDERS

We wrote to a broad range of organisations to invite them to share their views and experiences through online interviews.

Organisations who took part included:

- Welsh Government
- Local authorities
- Show Racism the Red Card
- The National Academy for Educational Leadership
- Education Workforce Council
- EYST
- Estyn
- Education Consortia.

In describing schools' current approach to dealing with racism and racist incidents, and the issue of racism in schools generally, some common themes emerged:

Racist incidents

The majority of interviewees acknowledged that racism was a reality within schools, and gave examples including racist bullying both inside and outside school, and incidents of verbal and physical racism, including stone-throwing, name calling and making 'jokes.'

In terms of reporting and recording of racist incidents, there was a clear consensus that there was currently both a lack of clarity about what counts as a racist incident or racist bullying, and also about the reporting and recording process.

Barriers to reporting & recording

Interviewees felt that barriers to recording and reporting of racist incidents by teachers included fears of damaging the school reputation, being afraid to report incidents to senior management teams, and, sometimes, a desire to "sweep it [racism] under a rug".

Training

Interviewees felt that more practical tools, training and resources were needed to support schools to respond to racism and racist incidents, as well as wider training on anti-racism and responding to racist incidents for the whole school community.

Many spoke about the current variation in access to training, and differences between schools and local authorities' funding of such training, with some only having access to one-off sessions. Some interviewees highlighted the issue of some training resources only being available in English, and emphasised that this should be accessible through the medium of Welsh.

National Guidance & Policy on racism

Interviewees reflected on the current national picture and the existing Welsh Government guidance for responding to racism and racist incidents in schools. Many respondents spoke positively about the Welsh Government's new commitment to diversity in the curriculum consolidated via Professor Charlotte Williams' Cynefin³⁰ report and the Anti-Racist Wales Plan.

However the majority of stakeholders viewed the current Welsh Government Anti-bullying guidance 'Rights, Respect, Equality' as being too 'vague' and broad, and not particularly helpful for dealing with racist incidents. One stakeholder commented that *"22 LA's will have different interpretations of this guidance"*. Many also spoke about the difficulty of distinguishing bullying from racism, with one stakeholder saying: *"There is a grey area between bullying and racism that is hard to decipher."*

Some spoke about their hope that a planned review of this guidance would have a greater focus on tackling racism and other prejudice-based bullying, and also on the voice of the child.

Others felt that there is already too much guidance and frameworks for schools and 'overstretched' teachers, and so did not wish to see more guidance. Rather, they wanted more awareness and support for the application of existing guidance. *"The sheer number of guidance and frameworks overwhelms schools. There is not enough time to read it"*.

Some also spoke about the existence of other sources of advice and professional learning for schools such as the training and resources offered by DARPL and BAME ED Network, which has been commissioned by Welsh Government, as well as by third sector organisations such as Show Racism the Red Card and EYST. However some mentioned that as these are not statutory guidance, teachers may not be aware of them.

Lack of National Data on Racism

Most interviewees agreed that there was a lack of clear data about racism and racist incidents in schools, as well as a lack of clarity on what reporting and recording mechanisms were required by schools and/or local authorities. We also heard about inconsistencies in how different schools and local authorities recorded and shared data on racist incidents, meaning that schools and local authorities were potentially missing out on opportunities to spot patterns and themes and tailor appropriate responses.

It was also noted that there is no current national recording mechanism for racist incidents, so it is not clear what happens to any data that may be gathered by local authorities. Furthermore, there was confusion about Welsh Government's current role and remit to gather such data, and about the requirements on schools and local authorities to share this.

There was widespread reference to the need for local authorities to be supported to improve their reporting and recording systems and to agree a single national system. There was also a noted absence currently of local and national structures for sharing good practice between schools.

The current lack of clear data was seen to be contributing to a lack of accountability, and addressing this was seen to be a clear prerequisite to achieving the aims of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.

Workforce

Another theme was the lack of diversity within the teaching workforce. Interviewees felt this had an impact on the ability of a school to respond effectively to racism in several ways. Interviewees felt that a lack of diversity contributed to a lack of teacher confidence, and lower levels of understanding and insight into the impact of racism on children and young people in school. Some interviewees also shared examples of unwittingly racist comments and cultural stereotyping by school staff, and of mixing up children from similar ethnic backgrounds. Some felt there was a need for continuous learning and support for existing staff, alongside efforts to diversify the workforce.

Curriculum

Interviewees commonly referenced the growing focus on inclusion within the school curriculum, particularly the new curriculum including the new duties to teach children's rights and to celebrate diversity. They also spoke about the increasing focus within schools on celebrating a broad range of cultures, and religious celebrations.

Good practice examples

There were also some good practice examples shared, of how schools were managing racism. For example, in Cardiff, all schools are encouraged to become 'Schools of Sanctuary' – this entails completing specific training which introduces the anti-bullying guidance and some training on anti-racism, with a particular focus on welcoming refugees and asylum-seekers. We also heard examples of schools working openly and proactively with Local Authorities to deal with and respond to racism and racist incidents. Many stakeholders also highlighted schools being proactive in reaching out and bringing in expertise from external agencies such as Show Racism the Red Card and DARPL to increase awareness amongst both pupils and teachers.

Connecting to the community

Another theme was the importance of connections between schools and the wider community, with good relationships and connections outside of school seen as helping to strengthen the schools' responses to incidents. Some mentioned that schools which are well connected to the wider community are able to help well with the integration of refugee families.

09

CONCLUSIONS



The voices collected in this report have given us some stark insight into the ways and extent to which children and young people are experiencing racism and racist incidents within secondary schools in Wales.

We have heard from minority ethnic children and young people from right across Wales that they experience racism in many ways from micro-aggressions to verbal and physical abuse, and that at the lower end of the scale, this experience is almost a normal part of life for them.

We have also heard about many reasons, illustrated by many personal experiences, of why learners may not report racist incidents, including: the normalization of racism, not really knowing what to expect if they do report; fear of being seen as a 'grass'; fear of escalation and retaliation or things getting worse if they do report; fear of the process being emotionally draining and burdensome; and not expecting much to happen anyway. This means that overall, the cost-benefit analysis means that it is usually not seen as worth reporting racist incidents. This suggests that those incidents which do get reported are really just the visible tip of a very large iceberg.

From teachers and headteachers we heard that they are cognizant of the issue, they experience hear and witness racism playing out in their schools and

classrooms. In schools with lower levels of ethnic diversity, teachers recognize that the experience of 'the isolated pupil' in a low diversity school may be even more acute and difficult, and there may be a challenge in making the issue of racism seem relevant in areas of lower ethnic diversity.

On the whole, teachers reported feeling under-equipped and unconfident to respond to racism. They would really like more practical and clearer guidance, as well as ongoing support on how they should respond to this evolving issue. It is clear that racism, like society is constantly changing and being able to keep up with quickly changing terminology and what is acceptable or not, was one clear challenge highlighted by educators.

Due to the voluntary nature of participation in our study, it is likely that the educators we heard from were those already most engaged on this topic, and therefore understanding and engagement levels may not be as high in all schools. From children and young people, we heard strong calls overall for schools to take racism more seriously, for there to be more training for teachers to understand racism and diversity, and for schools to do more to educate all children and young people about racism to stop it happening in the first place.

The wider stakeholders we spoke to concurred with both children and young people and teachers that racism in schools was a serious and widespread issue. They also agreed that more could be done to improve training for educators, on the need to strengthen guidance and collect more national data on racist incidents, and provide more support to schools to respond to this issue.

The overall messages are clear and resounding, and we therefore make the following recommendations to address and tackle racism and improve the response to racist incidents in secondary schools:

Recommendations



A stronger school response to Racism and Racist incidents

1. Welsh Government should clarify within its forthcoming refreshed anti-bullying guidance how it expects schools to respond to, record and address racist incidents;
2. Welsh Government should create supplementary guidance to clearly stipulate expectations around the wider school response to racism, in line with the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP), making clear its relevance to all schools, not only those with higher ethnic diversity.
3. School Improvement Consortia Wales should develop an 'anti-racism champion' role and steering groups including people and organisations with lived experience to support schools in revising policies, responding to incidents and upskilling staff on this topic, as well as offering direct advice to schools on live issues. These roles should link to and be supported by Welsh Government's proposed ARWAP Regional Coordinators.
4. Schools, Local Authorities and Estyn, should ensure that they have a clear policy on responding to racist incidents, and that this is part of every School Improvement plan. This should be developed with input from children and young people with lived experience of racism within the school community or drawing on pan-Wales stakeholders for less diverse communities
5. School policies on responding to racist incidents should be communicated to all pupils in an accessible and child and young person friendly way, to support learning and develop an anti-racist school culture
6. School policies on responding to racist incidents should be clear about what happens both for the person reporting, and the person alleged to have been racist and should include a section on providing regular, timely and sensitive feedback mechanisms to all those involved in and affected by the incident.
7. School policies on responding to racist incidents should also include a section on how they will share any learning and action taken from incidents with the wider school community.
8. Welsh Government, in its refreshed anti-bullying guidance, should direct schools to deal with and record racist incidents as equivalent to safeguarding incidents ensuring the visibility and accessibility of school-based and regional systems for raising concerns.



More training and support is needed for the whole school on understanding racism and responding to racist incidents

9. Training on racism and anti-racism and recognising and responding to racist incidents should be made mandatory for all education leaders, teachers and support staff, refreshed on a minimum 3 year cycle, similar to safeguarding training. To ensure quality and consistency, this should be coordinated via the Welsh Government funded DARPL network and linked to the work of the National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL).
10. More training and professional learning resources should be developed which cover different types of racism which are prevalent in Wales including faith-based racism (particularly Islamophobia and Anti-semitism), racism against white Europeans, racism against Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, and racism against refugees and asylum-seekers.
11. Welsh Government should update their guidance on school governors to make training on race awareness and recognising and responding to racism and racist incidents mandatory for all governors as part of their induction. This training should be delivered via Local Authorities.
12. School Governing Bodies should appoint an anti-racism lead (as part of their Governor Equity and Diversity role recently introduced) to support and challenge schools in revising policies, responding to incidents and upskilling staff on this topic. This lead should engage in relevant extended professional learning.
13. Ongoing work to support school governors to increase their racial literacy should be considered building on the findings of ESYTN's thematic review on School Governors³¹, and incorporating work underway by NAEL in supporting Governors, as well as by DARPL.
14. Regional Educational Consortia should work with experts in the field and those with lived experience to develop and deliver training and professional learning resources. They should also help to coordinate and engage with community organisations and individuals with expertise in racism and anti-racism, and should help facilitate the sharing of good practice emerging. This work should be supported by Welsh Government's proposed ARWAP Regional Coordinators.
15. There should be a dedicated space on Hwb for teachers to access information on racism and anti-racism including anti-racist resources, collate frequently asked questions and share up to date information including on terminology.
16. In line with the new Curriculum for Wales, Children and young pupils should have access to regular and effective opportunities to learn about race and diversity, including through learning experientially from visits and external providers with lived experience of racism. This would support and complement the diverse school curriculum.



The need to have National Data on racism in schools

17. Welsh Government should urgently progress its planned work to develop a Wales-wide system of recording and reporting of racist incidents in schools, ensuring there is a legal basis for this data collection, and clarifying the distinct roles and responsibilities of schools, local authorities and other bodies within this system.
18. This work by Welsh Government should include working with schools to agree clear and practical definitions of racism and racist incidents to enable consistent and meaningful data to be gathered.



Other

19. WJEC should progress as a priority, the work already underway with DARPL to review and revise text lists in the syllabi that contain racist language, recognising its impact on learners and the school environment/culture.
20. Welsh Government should direct Estyn to revise their Common Inspection Framework to place a stronger focus on how schools respond to, record and address racist incidents, ensuring that pupil voice and views on this are heard through their inspections.
21. Welsh Government should commission Estyn to undertake a good practice review to identify existing good practice in responding to racism and racist incidents amongst schools
22. Welsh Government should establish a task force involving education, community safety and youth justice representatives to explore and develop appropriate interventions for working with children and young people who express discriminatory views or behavior.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus Group participants

Region	Area	Make up of group	Focus Group Type	Number of Children participating
South East Wales	Cardiff	Secondary school – all participants from diverse backgrounds.	In person	7
	Vale of Glamorgan	Secondary school – all participants from diverse backgrounds.	In person	10
	Cardiff	Secondary school – mixture of participants from diverse backgrounds and White Welsh.	In person	29
	Bridgend	Secondary school – mixture of participants from diverse backgrounds and White Welsh.	In person	7
South West Wales	Swansea	Youth club – all boys from ethnically minoritised communities	In person	12
	Pembrokeshire	Youth Forum – predominantly White Welsh	In person	10
	Pembrokeshire	Secondary school - predominantly White Welsh, 4 mixed race children	In person	21
	Pembrokeshire	Youth club held in a mosque – all children from Muslim backgrounds from Arab and South Asian backgrounds (Predominantly Bangladeshi).	In person	13
	Swansea	Youth club – all girls from Romanian, Polish, South Asian, Arab backgrounds	In person	12
Mid Wales	Powys	Predominantly white welsh students, 4 of these students were from minority ethnic backgrounds (German, Polish, Irish, Italian)	In person	10
	Powys	A secondary school with a non-diverse population	In person	10
	Powys	A secondary school with a non-diverse population	In person	17
North Wales	Wrexham	Focus group ran with students who are involved with the Inclusion officers, some students are from Travelling communities, have migrated to Wales and have English as an additional language.	In person	8
	Denbighshire	Focus group ran with the diversity committee, a group focused challenging discrimination. The group consists of year 11 students who are upskilling younger children so the work continues.	Online	4
Total				170

CYP Focus Group Session Plan:

Activity	Resource/Equipment
<p>Introductions: Use script above to introduce session.</p>	<p>Name labels, pens and each participant has a questionnaire format on their chair to answer in writing.</p> <p>Fidget, colouring pens and paper to doodle on to be provided as well as a sensory table to be created for CYP.</p> <p>Large piece of paper - car park to park ideas and thoughts.</p> <p>Post it notes</p> <p>Poster of Rocio and Children Rights Card – Articles 2, 12, 16, 19, 31</p>
<p>Icebreaker: Introduce yourself and your biscuit of choice</p>	
<p>Focus Group question: What does racism mean to you? What does anti-racism mean to you?</p>	<p>Use flip chart to create a human body/gingerbread outline. Give participants post it's to answer this question and label accordingly.</p>
<p>Focus Group question: Tell us a little bit about how your school learns about different cultures, races and communities? Prompt: how would you like to learn about this?</p>	
<p>Focus Group question: Many schools have educational workshops focused on discussing racism – what do you think the impact of this is? Prompt: PSHE classes, Religious studies, workshops, Black history month (examples) Prompt: do you think all the children in your class take it seriously?</p>	
<p>Focus Group question: Are you aware of how your school manages racist incidences, if so how? Prompt: how would you change this?</p>	
<p>Focus Group question: Have you witnessed racism in school and do you feel comfortable telling us what happened? Prompt: Have you heard something happen to someone else? Prompt: What about online experiences?</p>	

<p>Focus Group question:</p> <p>What does reporting racism look like in your school?</p> <p>Prompt: What actions are carried out following an incident? Are there any consequences or steps taken?</p>	
<p>Focus Group question:</p> <p>What is stopping Layla from reporting this to her school?</p> <p>Prompt: what would you like to see in terms of reporting in your school?</p>	<p>Case study:</p> <p>Layla has started wearing a hijab to school, her friends from school are quite shocked and have made some 'jokes' in school saying that she looks stupid. They have also shared pictures online and the comments on Instagram are more hurtful. Layla hasn't told anybody about these comments.</p>
<p>Focus Group question:</p> <p>How could schools improve to support students experiencing racism better? Do you have any suggestions?</p>	
<p>AOB</p> <p>What would you like the Children's Commissioner to know about racism and racist incidents in secondary schools?</p> <p>Anything further to add</p> <p>Pop into an envelope – encourage CYP to write answers</p>	<p>Create a 'safe envelope'</p>
<p>Self-care activity</p> <p>Thank you for participating in today's focus group, we want to remind you of the next steps – a member of our team will type up all the information collected and share with the rest of the project team. The project team will use this information to write a report on Racism in Schools and we will send a copy to you when it is published. This will also be published on our website.</p> <p>Talking about racism is really challenging and we want to make sure you take care of yourself. We have created a pack with some activities that can help, but we want to highlight there are people you can talk to as well.</p> <p>You can contact our Investigation and Advice team. They are open Monday to Friday 9-5pm.</p> <p>Other spaces include: Victim Support, EYST and MEIC.</p>	<p>Handouts of activities and Support services.</p>

Endnotes

1. <https://www.gov.wales/final-report-black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-communities-contributions-and-cynefin-new-curriculum>
2. <https://racealliance.wales/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Show-Us-You-Care-Full-Report-1.pdf> <https://eyst.org.uk/assets/experiences-of-racism-and-race-in-schools-in-wales.pdf>
3. <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Ethnicity-National-Identity-and-Language/pupilsaged5andover-by-localauthorityregion-ethnicity>
4. https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Briefing_Report_E_2020_FINAL.pdf
5. <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/publications/tackling-islamophobia-resource/>
6. <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/our-work/ambitions-for-wales/ambitions-for-wales-findings/>
7. <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/our-work/three-year-strategy-2023-26/>
8. <https://www.gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-action-plan>
9. <https://gov.wales/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-education-report-welcomed-minister>
10. This is similar to and based on the definition of institutional racism used in the Macpherson report
11. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf
12. <https://www.gov.wales/rights-respect-equality-guidance-schools>
13. https://www.gov.wales/hate-hurts-wales?gclid=CjwKCAiAxxreqBhAxEiwAfGfndGrvLS2x1idM5JDHlePjckKuJVAn3sbDRn4dPL2EVKKAxz7_56zKBoCQxgQAvD_BwE
14. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-58706142>
15. https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CYP_affected_by_hate_crime_in_Wales_English1.pdf
16. [rights-respect-equality-statutory-guidance-for-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-statutory-guidance-for-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools.pdf); https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/review_of_psed_in_wales_full_report_english_nov2014.pdf
17. <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/introduction>
18. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/black-asian-minority-ethnic-communities-contributions-cynefin-new-curriculum-working-group-final-report.pdf>
19. <https://darpl.org/>
20. <https://www.theredcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/RacismInWales-ExploringracismtheEducationsystemMay2020F.pdf>
21. <https://www.theredcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ShowRacismtheRedCardReportSeptember2016.pdf>
22. <https://racealliance.wales/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Show-Us-You-Care-Full-Report-1.pdf>
23. <https://eyst.org.uk/assets/experiences-of-racism-and-race-in-schools-in-wales.pdf>
24. National Data - School Health Research Network (shr.nhs.uk)
25. https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/AmbitionsforWales_FINAL_ENG.pdf
26. We have used the term perpetrator to reflect the language used by many children and schools we spoke to. We recognise however that this can be a loaded and sometimes criminalising term and schools may wish to consider the use of terminology in their policies, particularly if focusing on a restorative justice approach.
27. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-statutory-guidance-for-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools.pdf>
28. https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/anti-racist-wales-action-plan_0.pdf
29. <https://darpl.org/>
30. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/black-asian-minority-ethnic-communities-contributions-cynefin-new-curriculum-working-group-final-report.pdf>
31. <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/school-governors-acting-critical-friends-and-impact-governor-training>

www.childrenscommissioner.wales

T: 01792 765600

E: post@childcomwales.org.uk

Twitter (X): @Childcomwales

Facebook: @childcomwales

Freephone Advice helpline:

0808 801 1000



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**

Children's
Commissioner
for **Wales**