

## **RACIST BULLYING**

Bullying Online is receiving an increasing number of letters and emails about racist bullying.

Recent incidents range from a child as young as six being told by a classmate that she cannot take the school mouse home because he doesn't like people with brown faces, to more serious incidents involving teenage gangs and weapons, one of which meant a boy was too frightened to return to school.

Neither is racist bullying confined to colour of skin. We've had complaints of non-Welsh and non-Scots children experiencing bullying.

These complaints have come from all parts of the country and are not confined to any particular area.

For some time, we've been concerned that Asian children have not been able to access the same help over bullying as other pupils and we are working on measures to address this. We find that it tends to be older brothers and sisters who email us over problems and that even though we always ask if their parents can also contact Bullying Online so that we can help them to sort the problem out, very few of them do so.

We've now established that this could be partly through language difficulties and we are looking at ways of helping Asian parents directly through schools, with the help of translators.

If this works in the way we hope in a pilot project we expect to carry out shortly, then it could allow Asian children in all schools in the UK to have the same opportunities as other pupils to seek help over bullying.

**You can email Bullying Online in any language and we will have it translated. Email us on [help@bullying.co.uk](mailto:help@bullying.co.uk).**

The police have been recording racial incidents separately since 1988 and figures have risen nearly every year since then. This is partly due to an increased willingness to become involved but also because it is now much easier to report racist incidents. For instance, if you live in the Cheshire Police area, you can report these incidents online at [www.cheshire.police.uk](http://www.cheshire.police.uk)

Schools need to know about tensions in their local communities. This information should be provided by the local police. It is possible that tensions and disputes within the community can manifest itself within schools.

Schools must keep a record book of the names of perpetrators of racial problems and are expected to work with the police and other agencies including the youth service and the wider community.

In the 1999 MacPherson Report, racist bullying was defined as "any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person". In its revised guidelines,

Don't Suffer in Silence, the DfES now says that anti-bullying policies should cover racist bullying.

These incidents can include racist abuse, physical threats or attacks, wearing of provocative badges, bringing racist comics or leaflets to school, inciting others to behave in a racist way, racist graffiti and refusing to co-operate with others.

To help more people, we hope to have the whole Bullying Online site translated into other languages in the future, so that all parents and children can access it.

### **For pupils**

Nobody has the right to call you names or to treat you badly because of your colour, race or religion. It's illegal and it can be stopped. You don't have to be a different colour to suffer racist bullying. You might have come from Romania or the former Yugoslavia.

There is a difference between racial discrimination and racism.

**Racial discrimination** means being treated differently to someone else because of your race, perhaps by being told you cannot wear a turban if you are a Sikh, a yarmulka if you are a Jewish boy or hijab if you are a Pakistani girl.

**Racism** means you are subjected to abuse and harassment because of your race, colour or beliefs.

You don't have to be a different colour to suffer racist bullying. You might have come from Romania or the former Yugoslavia.

**If you are reading this at school, because you don't have a computer at home, you can write to Bullying Online in your own language. We will have your letter translated and then reply in your own language.** Don't forget to include your own address!

Write to: Bullying Online, 9 Knox Way, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 3JL. You can email us on [help@bullying.co.uk](mailto:help@bullying.co.uk)

### **For parents**

Towards the end of 2001, the Commission for Racial Equality will be issuing codes of practice about how councils are expected to comply with the law and any information relating to education will be put into this section of the Bullying Online site as soon as it is published.

If you think your child has been subjected to racial discrimination then you can ask the Commission for Racial Equality for advice on what to do about it.

People from every background are covered by the Race Relations Act, there has been a case where an English couple complained of their treatment when they moved to Scotland.

The Act applies to all schools and colleges, whether or not they are run by your local council or are private schools. School governors and school boards also have to be mindful of the law which covers admission, how they treat pupils and exclusion as well as decisions on special educational needs.

If your child has been threatened or attacked because of his/her race, then you must contact the police. Parents say that the police are generally very helpful and this may be because they are now much more aware of racist issues themselves.

It is now a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to racially harass or assault anyone and the Public Order Act 1986 makes it an offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting language or behaviour to stir up racial hatred. Racist leaflets are also outlawed.

From April 2001, amendments to the 1976 Race Relations Act mean that complaints of racial discrimination in education can be brought straight to the county courts (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or sheriff courts (in Scotland) without having to be referred first to the Secretary of State for Education.

### **Practical help**

If your child is being called names relating to colour or religion then the first step is to write to the headteacher to explain what has been going on and to ask for it to be stopped immediately. Start keeping a diary of who said what and when, and who witnessed it.

If English is not your first language and you have contacts in the community, then tell them what is happening at your child's school, and ask for help. Your child may not be the only one suffering this problem. Dealing with bullying can be upsetting and isolating. Tell us about it so that we can help you. **We can have emails in other languages translated if that is easier for you than writing to us in English.**

The deadline for bringing a case to the county court is six months less one day from the behaviour you are complaining about, so if the school is unhelpful seek advice from the CRE immediately.

The Commission for Racial Equality does not have bottomless funds so few people are actually represented by it, although everyone gets initial advice and it will explain how to get public funding if you want to take the matter further.

A committee sits every six weeks to decide which cases to support. Decisions are taken on the basis of chances of success or whether a particular case can test a point of law.

### **Links:**

- **Commission for Racial Equality** [www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk)
- **For Sikh children** [www.sikhkids.com](http://www.sikhkids.com)
- **Race issues of interest to the police** [www.wypbcm.demon.co.uk](http://www.wypbcm.demon.co.uk)
- **Black Information Link.** Ethnic minority issues [www.blink.org.uk](http://www.blink.org.uk)

- **Confederation of Indian Organisations**, working with Asian voluntary organisations [www.blink.org.uk/organ/cio.htm](http://www.blink.org.uk/organ/cio.htm)
- **Victim Support** [www.victimsupport.com](http://www.victimsupport.com)
- **The Refugee Council**. The UK is now home to people from all corners of the world, including those from Romania and the former Yugoslavia.  
[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)
- **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**, relating to racially aggravated offences  
[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/cdact/racagoff.htm](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/cdact/racagoff.htm)
- **Simon Wiesenthal** survived death camps to become a Nazi hunter.  
[www.wiesenthal.com](http://www.wiesenthal.com)
- **Holocaust Memorial Day**: January 27 in the UK. This commemorates the date of the anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- **Anne Frank Memorial Day**: June 12