Supporting Pupils After Racialised Violence

A brief guide for teachers

The Raise Up Foundation | June 2026

When racist or anti-migrant violence is in the news, pupils notice, and some carry real fear. Being clear that racism is wrong, and supporting children who have been targeted, is not taking sides. It is part of our safeguarding and equality duties.

You do not need to be an expert to help. A few clear, calm steps make a real difference.

Start here:

- **Name it honestly.** Call racism racism, in age-appropriate terms. To a targeted child, silence can read as not caring.
- **It is not wrong or controversial.** Being clear that racism is wrong is not a breach of impartiality; it is part of your safeguarding and equality duties.
- **Safety before discussion.** A pupil who does not feel safe cannot easily reflect or learn.
- **You do not need all the answers.** Honesty and care matter more than expertise.

With affected pupils:

- **Check in quietly and one-to-one.** Do not single anyone out in front of the class.
- **Do not ask minoritised pupils to explain racism to others**, or to retell what happened for a lesson.
- **Watch for pupils who go quiet.** Distress can surface days or weeks later.

Talking to the class:

- **Acknowledge what has happened simply and truthfully**, and let pupils lead on what they want to discuss.
- **Facilitate understanding, not a "both sides" debate.** That racism is wrong, and that every child belongs, are not ideas which are up for debate.
- **Correct false claims** calmly and factually. Many pupils learn about these events on their phones first.

If a pupil voices hostile views about groups of people:

- **Try to maintain a positive relationship.** Keep them engaged rather than shutting them down.
- **Respond with questions and facts**, not only rules.
- **Share any safeguarding concern with your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL),** proportionately, rather than treating a child as a suspect.

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Flags, crosses and symbols

- **When religious language or symbols are used,** that does not mean that they speak for a faith, or all of the people of that faith.
- **Help pupils read the context**, who has gathered, what is being said, who is being shut out, rather than fear the symbol itself.
- **Reassure younger children that everyday symbols**, such as national flags, churches and religious symbols are not threats.

Look after yourself

- **These events affect staff too, and unevenly.** Do not carry it alone. Tell your DSL or line manager if you are worried about a pupil, or about yourself.

Being clear that racism is wrong, and supporting a child that feels targeted, is part of our safeguarding and equality duties (Equality Act 2010; Keeping Children Safe in Education). The Department for Education's own impartiality guidance describes opposition to racism as shared principle that schools 'should reinforce'. This is not a partisan position.