

Racism and bullying - similarities and differences

Similarities

- ❑ Pupils who are targeted experience great distress. They may become miserable, fearful and depressed and their progress at school may be severely damaged.
- ❑ Children and young people do not necessarily grow out of it.
- ❑ The distress is connected with feelings of being excluded and rejected.
- ❑ Also, the distress is because a characteristic is picked out which the person attacked can do nothing about - their size, whether they wear glasses, the colour of their hair, the colour of their skin, their religious or cultural background.
- ❑ Those who are bullying may develop a false pride in their own perceived strength and superiority.
- ❑ Teachers and even parents are sometimes not aware of the miseries that are being inflicted, or of the cruelty that is being perpetrated.
- ❑ When dealing with incidents, staff must attend to (a) the needs, feelings and wishes of pupils who are attacked (b) the needs, feelings and wishes of their parents and carers (c) the people responsible for the bullying behaviour and (d) any witnesses.

Differences

- ❑ Racism has a long history affecting millions of people and is a common feature in wider society. People are seriously harmed and injured by it, and sometimes even viciously attacked and murdered.
- ❑ The law of the land recognises the seriousness of racism by requiring that courts should impose higher sentences when an offence is aggravated by racist or religious hostility.
- ❑ The distinctive feature of a racist attack or insult is that a person is attacked not as an individual, as in most other bullying situations, but as the representative of a family, community or group. This has three particularly harmful consequences:
 - Other members of the same group, family or community are made to feel threatened and intimidated as well. So it is not just the pupil who is attacked who feels unwelcome or marginalised. 'When they can me a Paki,' explains nine-year-old Sereena, 'it's not just me they're hurting. It's all my family and all other black people too.'
 - Racist words and behaviour are experienced as attacks on the values, loyalties and commitments central to a person's sense of identity and self-worth.
 - Racist attacks are committed not only against a community but also, in the eyes of those carrying out the attacks themselves, on behalf of a community - they see themselves as representative of, and supported in their racism by, their friends, family and peer group.