

## Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools Policy

### PURPOSE

This policy supports government schools to strengthen their culture and practice to prevent and address racism, religious intolerance and racial and religious vilification. All Victorian government schools must implement this policy.

This policy supports compliance with Victoria's Child Safe Standards.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all Victorian government school staff, external practitioners, contractors and volunteers working with students.

This is a statewide policy. Schools are not required to have a local policy in addition to this policy.

The scope of this policy is primarily focused on the obligations of schools to provide culturally safe learning environments for their students.

### DEFINITIONS

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) defines racism as follows:

Racism takes many forms and can happen in numerous places. It includes prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their colour, ethnicity or national origin. People often associate racism with acts of abuse or harassment. However, it does not need to involve violent or intimidating behaviour.

Racism can be revealed through people's actions as well as their attitudes. It can also be reflected in systems and institutions that operate in ways that lead to unequal outcomes. Racism is more than just words, beliefs and actions. It includes all the barriers that prevent people from enjoying dignity and equality because of their race.'

Different forms of racism include:

- interpersonal racism – racism between individuals (students, staff, families, carers and members of the school community). This can occur in person or online
- systemic racism – structures, systems, policies, processes and practices that are inherently biased
- unconscious bias – a common type of racism where learned assumptions, beliefs or attitudes about people or groups of people are held without awareness
- racial or religious vilification – a behaviour that incites hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule for a person or group of people, because of their race or religion



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- racist bullying – repeated, deliberate and ongoing behaviour that belittles, mocks, intimidates, vilifies or shames someone because of their physical appearance, ethnic background, religious or cultural practices, and/or the way they talk or dress
- cultural tokenism – occurs when aspects of cultures are acknowledged superficially or because we have to. Even when well-intentioned, cultural tokenism oversimplifies cultural differences and at its worst can exacerbate existing stereotypes and prejudices about certain cultural groups
- colourism – the dislike, unfair treatment or assumptions made about a person or group of people because of the tone of their skin. Colourism can include prejudice against people with darker or lighter skin tones. For example, this is particularly important for First Nations students who may be told they are not Aboriginal because they have fair skin.

Religious discrimination or intolerance is another form of prejudice, similar to racism. It occurs when someone is treated unequally or differently because of their religious beliefs or activities. Some forms of religious discrimination or intolerance can be concurrent with racism, including Islamophobia and antisemitism.

Intersectionality refers to the way in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

## **POLICY**

Racism is not tolerated in Victorian government schools. Racism has significant detrimental impacts on mental health, learning and engagement, and contributes to disadvantage and isolation of young people.

To comply with [Child Safe Standard 1](#), as well as to support [Marrung](#) and the findings of the [Strengthening Aboriginal Self-Determination in Education report \(PDF\)](#), all government schools must establish a culturally safe environment, free from racism, for First Nations students, families, carers and communities.

Racism experienced by First Nations students, families, carers and communities comes in a range of forms, including (but not limited to), denial of self-determination, unconscious bias, stereotyping, and derogatory language, leading to lower expectations and reduced opportunities for First Nations students. Racism is often exacerbated by cultural bias and lack of understanding about the ongoing impacts of colonisation and injustices such as the forced removal of First Nations children from their families (known as the Stolen Generations), and this can perpetuate exclusion and culturally unsafe practices in schools.

### **Students who experience higher levels of racism or religious intolerance**

Data shows that First Nations students, students from African and Pasifika backgrounds and students from refugee backgrounds experience racism at higher rates than their peers. Students of faith, including Jewish and Muslim students, can experience religious intolerance such as antisemitism and Islamophobia.



## Preventing racism

[Child Safe Standard 1](#) requires schools to:

- provide a culturally safe, nurturing and inclusive environment for First Nations children and young people, where the 3 elements of cultural safety are implemented:
  - understanding identity
  - respecting culture
  - eliminating racism and abuse
- adopt measures to ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated
- develop and implement supportive and culturally safe processes for addressing racism.

Schools must be culturally safe for current and prospective First Nations students, families, carers and communities.

[Child Safe Standard 5](#) requires schools to:

- create environments where all children and young people feel welcome, their diversity is valued, and their needs are identified and are being met
- provide a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment for students from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds.

Students need to see and feel that their identity is reflected, understood and respected in their school.

Building staff capability to prevent and respond to racism and ensure cultural safety

[Child Safe Standard 5](#) requires schools to make sure that staff and volunteers understand the diverse circumstances of students and how to provide support to vulnerable students.

Schools can support this standard by providing opportunities for staff to undertake training on cultural competency, cultural safety, unconscious bias, or inclusive education practices.

## Promoting cultural diversity and inclusion in teaching and learning

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 will assist in strengthening understanding of cultural diversity and inclusion. [Intercultural Capability](#) and other cross-curriculum priorities, including [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures](#) and [Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia](#), must be taught in all Victorian government schools. [Holocaust Education](#), part of the [History curriculum](#), must also be taught in all Victorian government secondary schools.

Under the [Teaching and Learning Resources – Selecting Appropriate Materials policy](#), schools must avoid using culturally insensitive imagery. Schools should also find ways to identify and address unconscious bias



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in images or language and try to ensure that teaching and learning materials and resources reflect the diversity of their school community.

## **Responding to racism**

The [Managing and Reporting School Incidents \(Including Emergencies\) policy](#) requires schools to manage and respond to all reported incidents of racism that occur in school. Schools may be required to offer support and implement safety measures for students affected by racism incidents occurring outside of school, if those incidents are impacting students at school.

To implement timely, proportionate, safe, and inclusive responses, schools should:

- reassure the student (or parent) that the school believes their report and that it will be taken seriously
- consider the impact on the student, which may be different than the intent of the student who engaged in racism
- identify family or community members that the student trusts and who may be able to support the response process. This is particularly important for First Nations students to promote self-determination
- use educative and restorative approaches with the aim of restoring the relationships between the students, families, carers, staff and communities involved
- ensure affected students and their families or carers are informed of the school response, in line with privacy requirements.

When dealing with reports of racism, staff should refer to the steps outlined in Appendix A.

## **Reporting racism**

Under the [Managing and Reporting School Incidents \(Including Emergencies\) policy](#) schools must report incidents of racism, religious intolerance, and racial and religious vilification in eduSafe Plus, or by calling the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) on [1800 126 126](tel:1800126126).

Regional and central staff will support schools as required, following an eduSafe Plus report depending on the nature and severity of the incident.

Schools must ensure that everyone involved in the incident is informed of the school's response to the incident, while maintaining privacy requirements.



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## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Knowledge base
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## CONTACTS

To report racism, students, families and carers can contact their school or:

- [Report Racism hotline](#)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association \(VAEAI\)](#)
- [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

For additional support following an incident of racism:

- First Nations students, staff or families can contact [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association \(VAEAI\)](#)
- Jewish students, staff or families can contact the [Jewish Community Council of Victoria](#)
- Muslim students, staff or families can contact the [Islamic Council of Victoria](#).

For support with the Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools policy, schools, areas and regions may direct queries to the Multicultural and Refugee Supports Unit

(email: [multicultural.education@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:multicultural.education@education.vic.gov.au)).

## RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

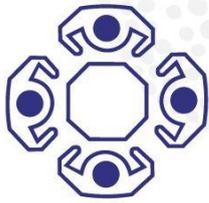
Our school policies and documents can be found at [portlandsc.vic.edu.au/our-school/policies/](http://portlandsc.vic.edu.au/our-school/policies/)

Relevant Policies and documents:

- Privacy Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Complaints Policy

## REVIEW CYCLE

DATE	VERSION	APPROVED BY	NEXT REVIEW
July 2024	3	Principal Jo Kindred	June 2026
November 2024	4	Principal Jo Kindred	October 2028
June 2025	5	Principal Jo Kindred	May 2029



## Appendix A:

The department's [Managing and Reporting School Incidents \(Including Emergencies\) policy](#) requires schools to manage and respond to all reported incidents of racism that occur in school. Schools may be required to offer support and implement safety measures for students affected by racism incidents occurring outside of school, if those incidents are impacting students at school.

In alignment with these policies in responding to incidents of racism, schools should do the following.

### 1. Identify the incident and immediate response

Assess and ensure safety

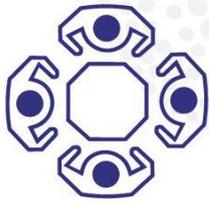
- Be student focused. Reassure the student (or parent/carer) that the school believes their report and that it will be taken seriously. Focus on the impact on the student, which may be different than the intent of the person who displayed the racism.
- Respond promptly. Remove the student from immediate risk or harm, such as separating them from the person who displayed the racism, or removing any offensive images or messages (take a photo for records before removing).
- Be mindful that incidents of racism can also be traumatic for witnesses and those who are listening and who have lived experience of racism.
- Ensure any questions or conversations have a calm and supportive tone to minimise students feeling interrogated.
- Engage wellbeing support if required.

Engage trusted parties and safely record evidence

- Involve people trusted by the student to foster safety and promote culturally appropriate responses. This might include a trusted staff member, family and/or community member.
- Offer interpreting services if required for communication.
- Keep a safe and accurate record of the incident and responses, ensuring privacy is maintained.

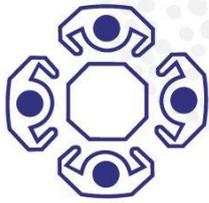
### 2. Report the incident

- Schools must report incidents of racism in either eduSafe Plus or by calling the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC – [1800 126 126](#)).
- Use the [Managing Incidents in My School guide \(staff login required\)](#) to determine the severity of the incident.



### 3. Ongoing support and recovery

- Work with the wellbeing and year level coordinators, teachers and relevant staff (such as Multicultural Education Aides and Koorie Engagement Support Officers) to monitor short to long term mental health needs of all involved, including victims, witnesses and those who displayed the racism.
- Engage regional or external support services if required. For example, [Koorie Engagement Support Officer](#), [Health, Wellbeing Key Contact](#) or [Student Support Services Key Contact](#).
- Use educative approaches to help all involved understand the impact of their actions.
- Use [Trauma-informed approaches](#) and/or [Restorative practice](#) to work towards repairing relationships, support de-escalation, and promote trust.
- If appropriate, consider disciplinary action for the person who displayed the racism, such as detention, withdrawal of privileges or other measures consistent with the department's [Behaviour – Students policy](#) and your own local school policy on Student Wellbeing and Engagement. Suspension must only be considered when it is consistent with the department's [Suspensions policy](#).
- If the incident occurs in the classroom, address the issue with the classroom group. Reinforce expectations of mutual respect and explain why certain behaviours are racist. Refer to [Key terminology and examples of forms of racism](#) to support identifying, preventing and addressing racism.
- Meet with students, families and carers to set clear expectations for future interactions.
- Update staff on the incident and actions to be taken and set out expectations for the management of any future incidents.
- In cases where racism affects the broader school community, which may be related to tensions between cultural groups, remind families, carers and communities of the school's values of cultural inclusion and anti-racism. Encourage families, carers and communities to reinforce the school's values at home, reinforce reporting processes (for example, promote the availability of the [Report Racism hotline](#)) and highlight any relevant available support services.
- Use the [School newsletter content – template \(DOCX\)](#) to communicate with families and carers about this policy, and promote any actions your school is taking to address racism and/or be culturally safe and inclusive. For example, consider providing a list of school-based roles and responsibilities that promote upstander behaviour.
- If the incident occurs online, refer to [Advice sheets for school staff and families regarding cybersafety and cyberbullying](#).



## **4. Inform affected parties of the response and outcome**

- Keep affected parties informed throughout the response and reporting process, while recognising that some information will need to be kept confidential in alignment with the [Privacy and Information Sharing policy](#).
- Communicating with affected parties will reassure them that the school responded and will give confidence in the importance of reporting racism.

## **5. Incident review and closure**

- Take time after an incident response to debrief and reflect on it in leadership or staff meetings, identify learnings, and discuss improvements that should be made to school policies, processes and practices to prevent similar incidents.
- Use de-identified incidents as case studies to build staff capabilities and enhance responses to racism.
- Ask: Does school data and the incident highlight bigger systemic issues that require further intervention beyond addressing the specific incident? For example, inclusive communication, discriminatory practices and opportunities to build staff skills and capabilities.

## **6. Analyse and learn**

- Regularly review racism incident reports to identify learnings and help monitor:
  - number and type of racism incidents
  - cohorts impacted
  - trends and challenges to inform system-level preventative measures and supports
  - impact and effectiveness of existing anti-racism efforts
  - school needs to access regional assistance and external supports.
- Identify relevant professional learning for staff or education programs for students to prevent racism. Refer to the Resources tab – [Preventing racism](#) and [Responding to and reporting racism](#)
- If data indicates a systemic issue, review relevant local school policies, such as Child Safety and Wellbeing, Complaints, Statement of Values and School Philosophy, Bullying Prevention, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations, Student Wellbeing and Engagement.
- Consider how anti-racism could be embedded in the School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan.