



“I found this guide really helpful. It helps me to understand what I should expect from my children’s school and how I can support them.”

Parent.

RACE EQUALITY AND SCHOOLS: A Guide for Parents and Carers

- **The importance of race equality in schools**
- **What the law says**
- **What schools should do**
- **What parents can do**

THE IMPORTANCE OF RACE EQUALITY IN SCHOOLS

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises previous equality legislation, including previous race equality legislation, into a single legal framework. It includes race as one of nine 'protected characteristics', and applies to education. Thus racial discrimination and disadvantage within schools, which can undermine children's confidence and hinder successful learning, remains an important consideration under equality law. For example, key race equality issues in schools include bullying, exclusions, and educational progression and attainment. Many of these issues can be a result of direct or indirect discrimination and therefore could be challenged under the provisions of the Act. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that every child is given the chance to meet their full potential. This can only be achieved when pupils feel valued and accepted.

Schools, parents and pupils therefore need to take action to identify and prevent racial discrimination and disadvantage of any sort in school.

It is not enough for schools to say that they support race equality. They have to act to create an environment in which racial discrimination and disadvantage is held to be unacceptable. Parents and carers need to know the law and their rights and they need to know what they can do – and what their children can do – to stop racial discrimination and disadvantage, and achieve race equality.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

Head teachers and governing bodies in all schools should ensure that everyone within their schools meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

- ✓ The Equality Act 2010 prohibits the following types of race discrimination (where race includes colour, ethnic or national origins, and nationality):
 - direct discrimination
 - indirect discrimination
 - discrimination based on perception
 - discrimination based on association
- ✓ The Equality Act also prohibits other forms of discrimination:
 - discrimination arising from disability
 - pregnancy and maternity discrimination
 - failure to provide a reasonable adjustment in relevant circumstances
- ✓ The Equality Act prohibits all forms of harassment in schools related to race, sex or disability
- ✓ Under new positive action provision, the Equality Act 2010 enables schools to take action to tackle a particular disadvantage, different needs, or disproportionately low participation, of a particular pupil group.

R A C E E Q U A L I T Y A N D S C H O O L S

- Such action could mean targeted provision, resources, or putting in place additional bespoke provision to benefit a particular disadvantaged pupils group such as an ethnic group or one based on religion or belief.
- ✓ The public sector equality duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities, including schools and academies, in all that they do, to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic, which includes race, and other characteristics
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- ✓ All schools (including academies in England) have specific duties under the Specific Duties Regulations 2011 to:
 - publish sufficient information by 6th April 2012 (and annually from that date) to demonstrate their compliance with the general equality duty. Schools must publish information:
 - to show that they have considered how the decisions that they make, and the services that they deliver, affect people who share different protected characteristics
 - in a way that is accessible by the public
 - prepare and publish one or more equality objectives (by 6th April 2012). These objectives must be:
 - specific and measurable
 - published at least once every four years
- ✓ The new Ofsted framework for school inspection came into force in January 2012. The new framework will concentrate on the quality of teaching and learning, backed by excellent leadership and management. Equality should be considered throughout all the inspectors' judgements, and inspectors will need to ensure that equality outcomes for different groups will form part of their judgements. For example, of particular relevance for race equality, inspections will cover:
 - attainment and rates of achievement of pupils
 - the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
 - discipline and behaviour, including the safety of schools from bullying and harassment

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

In order to play their part in establishing race equality in schools, parents and carers need to know what schools should be doing.

It will be essential to demonstrate the importance of race equality within the context of the new legislation. Schools should be aware that advancing race equality supports the agenda of improving attainment and progression of all ethnic groups. All schools should take the following actions:

- ✓ demonstrate commitment to equality, including race equality, through senior leadership within the governing body and senior staff
- ✓ identify senior staff to take responsibility for equality work
- ✓ ensure that race equality, as with all the protected characteristics, is taken into account when devising and reviewing policies and objectives
- ✓ make a significant aspect of race equality an objective under the equality duty, and ensure their objectives are specific and measurable
- ✓ consider taking positive action measures to close any identified gaps between the participation and/or attainment of specific ethnic groups
- ✓ provide equality training and guidance for all staff and governors
- ✓ ensure that race equality is part of the curriculum for teaching and learning
- ✓ work towards ensuring that the school workforce reflects the diversity of the local community
- ✓ gather, analyse and act upon all data on pupil performance
- ✓ involve relevant local community organisations in the life of the school, to provide extracurricular activities and services such as mentoring, revision classes and language teaching
- ✓ share best practice with other schools in the wider community through the school's website, newsletters and the local press
- ✓ involve parents as key partners in developing and implementing the schools equality objectives and activities

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- ✓ ask questions and be active
- ✓ get engaged in helping the school develop its objectives in relation to race equality
- ✓ find out whether the school's staff reflects the ethnicity of the area, especially at senior management level
- ✓ investigate the performance of ethnic groups in the school and point out any obvious inequalities to the school
- ✓ suggest that the school takes positive action measures to close any identified gaps between the participation and/or attainment of specific ethnic groups
- ✓ ask for information about admissions and exclusions of pupils from different ethnic groups, and whether the school population reflects the ethnicity of the area's young people
- ✓ be vigilant about any possible racial discrimination experienced by your child or other children at the school
- ✓ become actively involved in the school's activities, such as the parent teacher association
- ✓ provide feedback – congratulate the school if you feel it is doing well, and tell others about it

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

- ✓ The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published a draft Code of Practice on the Equality Act for schools in England and Wales, due to be issued in April 2012
- see "<http://tinyurl.com/67xfa9r>
- ✓ The Government Equalities Office has published a Quick Start Guide to the Specific Duties of the Equality Act 2010: <http://tinyurl.com/6awdu9r>
- ✓ Parent View is the new Ofsted parent portal giving parents a voice and Ofsted important feedback about their children's schools: <http://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk>
- ✓ For general educational information contact the Department for Education:
telephone 0370 000 2288 or <http://www.education.gov.uk>



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