

Countering racist bullying

Paper 11: Racist bullying and other bullying
– similarities and differences

Similarities

- ❑ Pupils who are targeted experience great distress. They may become fearful, depressed and lacking in self-confidence, and their progress at school may be severely damaged.
- ❑ The distress is connected with feelings of being excluded and rejected.
- ❑ Also, the distress is because a characteristic is picked out as a justification for the bullying that 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 engage in bullying develop a false pride in their own 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 children and young people principally responsible for the bullying (d) any supporters they have and (e) any bystanders and 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 offences, 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 call 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. Often, therefore, they hurt more deeply as well as more widely.
 - Racist attacks are committed not only against a community but also, in the eyes of offenders themselves, on behalf of a community – offenders see themselves as representative of, and supported in their racism by, their friends, family and peer group.