

Paper 12: Recording and reporting

Why do we have to record and report?

- The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (the Macpherson report) recommended that schools should record all racist incidents, and inform local authorities. A further recommendation was that Ofsted should examine the implementation of these measures. The purpose of such reporting is to monitor the level of racist incidents nationally and regionally; to look for any patterns in their occurrence; and to plan steps to prevent and address them.
- If local authorities feed information back to headteachers and chairs of governors on patterns and trends, they can compare their own experience with aggregated local data.
- Procedures of reporting and recording help schools to identify and analyse specific types of incident and therefore contribute to school self-evaluation and action-planning processes. For example, they indicate needs that can be picked up through the PSHE and citizenship curriculum, and through school pastoral processes.

Who will see the information?

- Information from schools should be returned to the local authority in aggregated form. Information then submitted then by the authority to the government is in a statutory aggregated format, showing numbers of incidents and those in which follow-up action has been taken. It does not include the names of individual schools.

Should schools aim for a nil return?

- A school's population does not exist in a vacuum away from the rest of society, nor is it unchanging. It would be unrealistic in any school to expect that no racist comments will ever be made. A nil return from a school might imply that pupils are not confident about reporting incidents to staff, or that staff have not understood the nature or seriousness of racist incidents.

Will it look bad if a school has a lot of incidents on its return?

- Absolutely not. On the contrary, recording of incidents is evidence that the school has developed a positive atmosphere and ethos in which pupils feel confident that reports will be taken seriously and dealt with.
- If the reporting procedures are successful, an initial increase in the number of incidents reported can be expected, as schools become more successful in promoting this positive ethos. Subsequently it can be expected that the numbers of reported incidents will decrease, as schools develop more effective measures for preventing them.

Do we have to record small, insignificant incidents?

- Yes, every incident, no matter how seemingly small, must be recorded and dealt with. Racist name-calling is hurtful and damaging to the pupil who is attacked and to the school community. If pupils responsible for racist bullying are permitted to believe that racism is acceptable they may become involved later in serious criminal violence.

- Recording seemingly minor incidents can be useful to the school, for example in identifying whether current events or local contexts are causing an increase in harassment of particular pupils.
- It is usually possible to deal with minor incidents straightaway, in the classroom or playground context. Only the more serious or repeated incidents will need reporting on to parents or outside agencies.

If we highlight racist incidents, couldn't this lead to a worse situation?

- It is important, of course, to treat all situations with sensitivity, and therefore to avoid over-reacting or creating martyrs, and in these ways bringing the school rules about racist bullying into disrepute.
- However, the much more substantial danger lies in ignoring incidents and giving pupils the impression that adults condone racist behaviour. Ignoring incidents means that pupils who are attacked feel unsupported, and so do their friends and families, and that responsible for the bullying feel affirmed and approved of.

How do we decide if an incident is racist?

- Ofsted has adopted the definition of a racist incident that was created by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and modified slightly by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report: '*A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.*'
- When an incident perceived to be racist is investigated at a school, the following points should be considered:
 - whether pupils alleged to be responsible are known to hold racist views or to engage in racist behaviour
 - whether they are part of a friendship group known to hold racist views or engage in racist behaviour
 - whether they were wearing outward signs of belonging to a racist culture (for example, skinhead clothes and haircut, BNP insignia)
 - whether the clothing of the person attacked clearly identified her or him as belonging to a particular religious or cultural group
 - whether there was no, or only slight, provocation
 - whether there is no other explanation for the incident.

Why does the Ofsted definition stress perception?

- It is for the purposes of initial recording. Just because an incident is alleged or perceived to be racist does not mean that it *is* racist. But it *does* mean that it must be recorded and investigated.
- Whether or not the pupil(s) responsible intended their behaviour to be racist is irrelevant. Of course, when it comes to dealing with an incident, their intentions and attitudes are an important consideration. But at the stage of initial recording and investigating, their attitudes, motivation and awareness are not the main issue.