



Responding to Far-Right Extremism and Racism in Current Events

Guidance for Educators in Scotland

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Contents

1. Overview	2
2. Reflective questions for educators	3
3. Reflective questions for school leaders	4
4. Practical advice for discussions	4
5. Safeguarding.....	6
6. Tackling disinformation.....	7
7. Moving forward.....	9

1. Overview

Discussing far-right riots and racist incidents is complex. Avoiding the topic can leave misinformation unchallenged and young people unsupported; and addressing it without care can risk harm. This guidance is designed to support practitioners with this critical discussions, and is developed utilizing the work of the [Building Racial Literacy programme](#) and Scottish Government's [whole school approach to racism and racist incidents](#).

Educators are encouraged to:

Create safe but not silent spaces

- Acknowledge what has happened in age-appropriate ways – this could be through resources such as story books for younger learners, and news articles for older learners. The [Young Anti-racist Voices of Scotland Anthology](#) provides a plethora of creative work and case studies to support discussing anti-racism with young people, and the web page contains guidance for educators using the resource.
- Reassure learners that racism and violence are not acceptable and that schools are committed to safety and inclusion.
- Acknowledge that conversations about racism can be uncomfortable – for pupils and for staff. On the Building Racial Literacy programme, these [Safer, Braver Learning Principles](#) are shared to help facilitate productive conversations. These can be utilised in other spaces, or be adapted for use with young learners.
- Embedding anti-racism in everyday learning can cultivate easier spaces for discussions. [Antiracisted.scot](#) offers professional learning, reflective tools, and practical classroom strategies.

Centre those most affected

- Be mindful that racialised learners may be directly impacted - emotionally, psychologically, or through lived experience.
- Avoid placing the burden of explanation on them; instead, validate and protect.

Challenge misinformation and extremist narratives

- Support learners to critically analyse sources, narratives, and online content.
- Explicitly address how far-right ideologies often rely on fear, misinformation, and dehumanisation.

Uphold rights-based language

- Frame discussions using Scotland's commitment to human rights, equality, and dignity. This could be through both the lens of [the UNCRC](#) or [Scottish Government's anti-racism in education commitment](#):
Racism exists within our education system, interpersonally and institutionally. We commit to eradicating racism through our anti-racist actions and policies.
- Reinforce that racism is not a matter of "opinion" but a violation of rights and wellbeing.

2. Reflective questions for educators

- What messages might learners already be receiving about these events—from social media, peers, or community—and how can I responsibly engage with or correct these?
- Whose voices and experiences are being centred in our discussion? Whose are missing?
- How do I respond if a learner expresses harmful or discriminatory views while maintaining a learning environment that challenges, rather than shuts down, dialogue?
- What assumptions might I be bringing into the conversation, and how do I ensure they do not reinforce bias?

- How can I connect current events to ongoing learning about racism, power, and justice, rather than treating them as isolated incidents?

3. Reflective questions for school leaders

- How are we clearly demonstrating an active anti-racist stance through our leadership, actions, and communication?
- How confident are our staff in facilitating discussions about racism and current events, and what support do they need?
- Do we have consistent, well-understood processes for responding to and recording racist incidents?
- How are we ensuring racialised learners feel safe, supported, and not burdened during these discussions, without singling them out or putting them on the spot?
- In what ways are we embedding racial literacy across the curriculum, not just responding in moments of crisis?
- How are we supporting staff wellbeing, particularly those who may be personally impacted?
- How effectively are we engaging with families and communities to reinforce clear, anti-racist messages?
- How are we ensuring our response leads to sustained, long-term change rather than short-term action?

4. Practical advice for discussions

- Ensure that learners understand they can speak to staff if they are concerned, anxious, or affected by current events. This is particularly important for learners from Black, Brown, migrant, refugee, or minority ethnic backgrounds, who may be experiencing heightened feelings of vulnerability or uncertainty. Reiterate the pastoral support available within the setting.
- Staff should be alert to instances where individuals or groups of learners are blamed, stereotyped, or targeted because of their race, ethnicity, nationality,

migration status, or faith. When incidents arise in connection with current social, political, or cultural events, staff may wish to support learners in understanding that communities or groups of people should not face collective blame or scapegoating.

- Establish clear discussion agreements (e.g. respect, listening, no harm).
- Use structured dialogue formats where possible. [The Digital Discourse resource](#) from Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) and Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) includes a free professional learning course with strong strategies for this, such as the *PEACE* framework:
 - **Pause:** *Before responding - pause. This allows for a short moment of silence, which acts to situate you in control of the dialogue while providing space for a calm response.*
 - **Empathy:** *Address the behaviour or comments and don't 'label' the person - remind them of their positive qualities that behaviour or language like this contradicts.*
 - **Ask:** *Questions to encourage critical reflection. Using open-ended questions invites the person to think deeper on their own, reflect, and sows seeds of doubt: "Why did you say that?"*
 - **Correct:** *disinformation if you can by providing facts that directly challenge misconceptions*
 - **Encourage:** *respect for others and fact-checking information*
- **Calling-in and calling-out** are two approaches educators can use to respond to harmful language or behaviour. Calling-in focuses on curiosity and learning, helping someone understand why their words or actions may be harmful when there is openness to change. Calling-out is used when harm is more serious or ongoing, requiring a clear, immediate response to challenge behaviour and maintain a safe environment. Both approaches aim to address harm while supporting respectful, anti-racist learning spaces.
- Provide opt-out or alternative reflective activities for learners who may feel overwhelmed.

- Engage with pastoral care teams and networks to support wellbeing where possible. Ethnic minority educators may be interested in the work of the [Scottish Association of Minority Ethnic Educators \(SAMEE\)](#).
- Use the [Whole School Approach to Racism and Racist Incidents \(Scottish Government\)](#) for Strategic guidance on prevention, response, and recording of racist incidents.
- Schools may want to call on relationships with local organisations and areas, such as Faith establishments, youth groups, community learning and development teams, and community police. This page, [Community Resilience | Curriculum themes | Curriculum for Excellence | Education Scotland](#), contains extensive guidance on a developing a community approach.
- Teachers may wish to consider whether planned learning across the curriculum provides opportunities to explore themes such as stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, scapegoating, and inclusion. In line with Respect for All: the National Approach to Anti-Bullying, the curriculum can provide a meaningful context for developing learners' critical thinking, empathy, and understanding of rights and responsibilities.

5. Safeguarding

Where schools and education settings are open about a rights-based approach and/or anti-racism work, there is a risk of negative attention from online trolls or far-right individuals or groups. The following safeguarding guidance is recommended:

- **Avoid real-time posting** of school activities or events where possible, particularly those linked to sensitive themes. Post about events the day after instead.
- **Engage proactively with parent/carer groups and associations** to build understanding of the school's anti-racist approach and support respectful, informed dialogue.
- **Promote consistent, calm messaging** with families to prevent escalation or misunderstanding, particularly during heightened public attention.

- **Frame school communications within national guidance** (e.g. Scottish Government and Education Scotland) to ensure messages are grounded in shared expectations and are not perceived as isolated or individual positions.
- **Reinforce that anti-racism is a national, rights-based priority**, not a discretionary or localised initiative.
- **Ensure staff do not respond individually to online incidents** (e.g. challenging comments or community posts); instead, follow agreed school or local authority communication routes.
- **Report and record online harm**, including racist content, harassment, or threats, in line with safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- **Support learners to navigate social media safely** by reinforcing expectations around respectful behaviour, critical thinking, and reporting harmful content.
- **Escalate serious concerns appropriately**, including threats or targeted hate, rather than attempting to manage these at classroom or individual level.

6. Tackling disinformation

(Extracted and edited from [Teaching about conflict and war: Support for educators | Resources | Education Scotland](#))

Schools may also wish to consider the role that disinformation and online content can play in influencing behaviours, increasing fear, and amplifying prejudice. It is important that children and young people understand where to source news content and have the skills to evaluate its reliability.

[You decide - A political literacy resource](#) is a resource to help teachers with the teaching of controversial issues. There is information on techniques which can be used to help children and young people to improve their political literacy. Within You Decide, there is a resource which provides suggestions of how to help learners from first to third level to understand how fake news may affect them, see [Fake News resource](#). All of these resources are also available in Gaelic.

[Source Checker](#) is an interactive online game provided by ABC Education. It teaches primary school children how to recognise bias and disinformation, and how to identify

reliable sources of information online. It can be used during classroom learning to facilitate discussions. For secondary settings, [Bad News](#) is an online role-play game for teenagers which develops their skills in recognising disinformation and manipulative online content. Both are recommended for use in schools and education settings by Time for Inclusive Education through its Digital Discourse Initiative.

The BBC has a wealth of relevant resources in this area, including:

- [BBC Teach: Fake News - Teaching Resources](#);
- [BBC Own It - What is fake news and how do I spot it?](#)

The EIS's '[Disrupt Disinformation – Let's Change the Story](#)' resource is also an evolving resource for this. Additional resources for use in schools and education settings are available through the aforementioned [Digital Discourse Initiative platform](#), including a "Features of Disinformation" learning wheel and tools for teaching digital literacy skills to children and young people.

It may be useful for learners to consider some of the issues around the sharing and availability of information in past conflicts. How does the media and live reporting affect opinions? How does the emphasis on some conflicts rather than others in the media affect public opinion? This could connect to existing or forthcoming Social Studies learning regarding democracy, citizenship, and media ethics.

As part of the expansion of its Digital Discourse Initiative programme, Time for Inclusive Education has opened a waiting list for learner workshops focused on information manipulation, prejudicial conspiracy narratives, and being responsible online. Workshops will be available for primary and secondary settings (P4-S6) and are designed to develop learners' critical media literacy skills. Schools and education settings interested in participating can [register their interest here](#).

7. Moving forward

These events are not isolated; they are part of broader social patterns that require sustained, systemic, and courageous responses. To cultivate a sustainable anti-racist environment, education settings should:

- Engage in ongoing anti-racist professional learning. Staff may be interested in the work of [Building Racial Literacy](#) - an anti-racist online professional learning programme and community.
- Support staff wellbeing when navigating difficult conversations
- Ensure consistent, transparent processes for addressing racism using the Scottish Government's [whole school approach to racism and racist incidents](#) guidance.
- Work to embed anti-racism across the curriculum, drawing on the [Principles for an Anti-Racist Curriculum](#) to ensure learning is inclusive, critical, and reflective of diverse perspectives.

Education has a vital role in shaping a more just and inclusive Scotland. There are no neat solutions, but we remain committed to working alongside educators to build racial literacy, challenge racism, and support all learners to thrive.

If you would like further advice on these issues, please do not hesitate to get in touch at edsbrl@educationscotland.gov.scot.