Language and Terminology

An Introduction

What is racism?

Racism in school can take many forms (please see the glossary for a full definition) with individuals or groups of people being targeted or treated unfairly based on their skin colour, religion, nationality or culture. The most commonly reported form in schools is interpersonal - comments, words or interaction targeting individuals, whether they be pupils or staff.

What does it look like?

- Verbal abuse, online bullying, physical abuse and exclusion from activities.
- The most common form pupils face is verbal abuse through the use of racist terminology and racial stereotyping.

Why is understanding language and terminology so important?

- Language is a very powerful method of structuring attitudes.
- Language and terminology hugely influences how pupils perceive themselves, others and the world around them.
- Language and terminology can contribute to the creation and perpetuation of racial stereotyping and belief systems.

What can I do to help my pupils?

Develop your own and your pupils' awareness of, and sensitivity to, the oppressive and discriminatory potential of language.

- Ensure pupils know what is acceptable and unacceptable and why.
- You must acknowledge certain language and words are unacceptable regardless of whether or not pupils intentionally use them to hurt, the intent behind language doesn't necessary alter the effect words can have.
- It is your responsibility to challenge and report all use of racist terminology, regardless of intent.

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SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD

So, what terminology is acceptable and unacceptable?

✗ Why?	✓ Why?
Coloured Historically used in a derogatory way to separate and segregate Black people. White people decided this was the word that should be used to describe anybody who was not white, which may imply that to be white is 'normal' or default.	**Black** Black is a term that has been chosen by and is used by many Black people. There are lots of rumours that cause people to feel uncomfortable about saying Black, these rumours are untrue and as a descriptive term it is completely acceptable.
Nigger/Nigga Originated as a term referring to Black people as a variation of the Spanish/Portuguese noun 'negro' and descends from the Latin adjective niger meaning 'Black'. Historically 'the N word' was used as an intentionally derogatory word as early as the 17th century. It has accompanied the Slave Trade, innumerable lynchings, castrations, beatings, acts of arson, and other racially motivated attacks against Black people. The Transatlantic Slave Trade alone saw an estimated 22-55 million deaths of Black people.	**Black** The word Black describes a skin colour, not the word 'the N word'. 'The N word' is a complicated word as hip hop culture has tried to reappropriate it to mean 'friend'. However even when people talk about appropriating the word 'the N word' its history still exists. The word is inextricably linked with violence and brutality on Black people's self-worth and physical abuse on Black bodies. No amount of appropriating can erase that. Allowing Black or white pupils to use this word to describe someone is unacceptable.
Half-Caste Historically used to describe people of mixed race or ethnicity. It is derived from the Latin 'castus', meaning 'pure'. In other words half-caste meant a person that was half-pure. In Australia, the term half-caste was widely used in the 19th and 20th century British Commonwealth Laws to refer to the offspring of white colonists and native Aboriginal people. Laws stated that the Australian government could seize such children and forcibly remove them from their parents.	**Mixed...** 'Mixed parentage', 'mixed heritage' and 'mixed race' are acceptable alternatives to describe a person's ethnicity. However, when using 'mixed race', it is important to remember that 'race' is a social construct and there are not different races within humanity.

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So, what terminology is acceptable and unacceptable?

✓ Why?	✗ Why?
Gypo / Pikey Derogatory terms to describe Gypsies or Travellers often used to describe someone who is scruffy, creating negative associations. Pikey derives from pike, which meant to 'go away from, to go on' and related to the words turnpike (toll-road) and pike-man (toll-collector).	**Gypsy or Traveller** The terms 'Gypsy, Roma or Traveller' may be appropriate but proceed with caution as there are many different Gypsy and Traveller groups and the words are not to be used interchangeably.
Paki During the 1970s and 1980s Britain was faced with a wave of racist violence. This included 'Paki-bashing' gangs for whom the word meant any person who was presumed to be from South Asia or of South Asian descent because of their skin colour. People from different age groups and backgrounds were murdered or physically and verbally attacked.	**Pakistani/Asian** Pakistani is the correct term for the nationality of a person from Pakistan. Pak means 'pure' in Urdu and Persian and stan is the Persian word meaning 'place of'. Hence the name Pakistan means land of the pure. The 'i' was added to ease pronunciation. People from an Asian background sometimes refer to themselves as 'brown', which is an acceptable descriptor, along with the term Asian.
Chinky Chinky (also chink) is an ethnic slur referring primarily to a person of Chinese ethnicity, although it is sometimes used to refer to people of other Asian descent, or to people who have physical features that are characteristic of many Asian people.	**Chinese** Chinese is the correct term for the nationality of a person from China. China is the English translation for Zhongguo, believed to have become popular in the mid 19th century.

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