

Dealing with Discrimination - A Parent's Guide



Please contact us on 0845 090 8044 for other leaflet formats e.g. large print, audio, another language or through discussion.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is when someone is treated or considered differently to someone else because of their race, their gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion.

There are nine areas of life which the law protects against discrimination. They are:

- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Gender
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Gender reassignment (if a person undergoes surgery to change their sex)
- Marriage & Civil partnership

Discrimination can happen in a number of ways but usually takes place through:

- Name calling or insults including jokes and imitating someone in order to make fun of them
- Being excluded from activities by others
- Physical assault
- Indirect discrimination – spreading rumours, encouraging others to behave in a threatening/discriminatory way. For example: writing graffiti about someone or abusing their personal belongings.
- You should also be aware that organisations can also discriminate through their processes; this is commonly known as institutional discrimination. Organisations can also be held accountable for their actions under the Equality Act 2010.

To help prevent and tackle discrimination

- Talk with your child about their life and their family. Discuss culture and your child's chosen life styles in a way that they understand.
- Try and ensure that your child feels comfortable in his or her "**own skin**".
- Regularly discuss with your child the issues that put them in a minority group.
- Encourage your child to always talk about anything which may have upset them during the day.
- If your child tells you anything that may even hint at discrimination, you should:
 - Listen to them carefully and if appropriate, ask further questions.
 - Ask them what they would like you to do about it, but say you may need to tell someone else.
 - Contact the school to make sure that your child has told someone in school.
 - Ask the school to investigate the issue.
 - Always keep your child up to date on the situation. If you have had a meeting with someone at their school, tell your child what you talked about and what the school is going to do to try and solve the problem.
 - Make sure that your response to your child is positive. Tell them that they have done the right thing in telling you about the problem.

If it is a racist incident the school should record and report the incident using the combating racist incident process.

It is important to note that children can be discriminated against because their parents belong to any of the protected groups listed on page 2. For example, children may be discriminated against because their parents are a same sex couple.

- The school can do many things depending on the nature of the incidents. Sanctions can range from just talking to the child/children involved to giving an exclusion for a more serious incident or if they are repeatedly involved in discriminatory behaviour against someone.

By law your child's school should have equality policies and objectives. There should be links in other policies to show how they will deal with protected groups and the school's equalities policies should detail how they will deal with discrimination when it happens. A good policy should show:

- How they will eliminate discrimination
- How they will promote equal opportunities
- How they will promote good relationships between all groups within the school

You have a right to see all school policies, so don't be afraid to ask the school for a copy of them.

How can I tell if my child is a victim of discrimination?

As a parent/carer or family member you will probably be the first to notice a change. Common signs that your child might be discriminated against include:

- Complaining of headaches
- Complaining of stomach aches
- Anger
- Being quiet and withdrawn
- Not wanting to go to school
- Fear of walking home alone
- Lost or damaged possessions

The Complaints Process

If you think your child is being discriminated against you should:

- First of all talk to your child's teacher to see if they are aware of a problem.
- Check regularly with your child to see if things have improved.
- If things have not improved arrange a meeting with head teacher of your child's school.
- If things are still not improving and you are still unhappy, you can write formally to the schools governing body. You will need to check the school's complaints procedure to see how you do this.
- If you are still not happy you can contact the Local Authority Complaints Officer on 01926 742070. If it is a racial incident you can contact the Schools Race Equality Officer on 01926 742358.

Prejudice driven bullying can affect all of the protected areas listed on page 2. However, racist bullying, sexist and homophobic bullying and bullying because of a disability are classed as 'Hate Crime' so even if the bullying is between children and young people, the police may get involved. If you are affected by this and would like further information go to www.warwickshire.police.uk or ring **0845 129 2221**.

If the incident is within school time and on school property you should use the complaints procedure detailed above.

Useful Contacts and Websites

The Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is the statutory body established to help eliminate discrimination and reduce inequality.

Helpline: 0845 604 6610

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Government Equalities Office

Provide general information about the Governments equality strategy and legislation.

www.equalities.gov.uk

True Vision

Hate crime in any form is wrong. True Vision gives you information about hate crime or incidents and how to report them.

www.report-it.org.uk

Notes

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Other titles in this series include:

Choosing a Secondary School 7 – 11

Choosing Childcare and Early Education

Dealing with Bullying – A Parents' Guide

Dealing with Separation and Divorce

Encouraging Good Behaviour

Life with a Teenager

Surfing Safely – Your Family's Guide to Internet Safety

Tackling Homework and Revision

Talking to Your Children about Relationships and Sex

Teens in Trouble

Why Dads Matter

Your Child's Learning – Getting Involved

If you are looking for any further information or advice for your family the Family Information Service can help you. We offer a free and impartial information and signposting service for parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-20 on a range of topics such as; childcare, benefits, health, leisure and much more. If you don't know who to ask, ask the Family Information Service!

Tel: 0845 090 8044 or 01926 742274

Email: fis@warwickshire.gov.uk

Web: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis

