

Part Four: Recognising and Responding to Islamophobic Incidents

How to Recognise an Islamophobic Incident

The working definition, which should be employed when considering Islamophobic incidents is outlined below:

'An Islamophobic incident is any incident which is perceived to be Islamophobic by the victim or any other person' (CPS, 2017)

This is a working definition. It informs people how to respond when they become aware of the incident and ensures that the incident is investigated. Importantly, it ensures that people are listened to. Young people and staff are more likely to speak up about Islamophobic incidents if they know that they will be taken seriously. Historically, targets have been dismissed or ignored, which can be devastating for them, preventing others from speaking up and allowing incidents to escalate.

It may be that at the end of the investigation it is decided that the incident was not Islamophobic, but the school will have all the information and evidence to back up this decision and will be able to explain the reasoning behind their decision to all parties.

It is important to note that there is no mention of intention, just because someone didn't intend to offend, doesn't change the impact of the action. Intention is important when considering the actions that need to be taken with the perpetrator, but a lack of intent does not prevent it from being an Islamophobic incident. The definition empowers everyone to act. The onus is not just on the target to speak up. The inclusion of 'or any other person' means that anyone who perceives an Islamophobic incident to have occurred can instigate an investigation. This also ensures that incidents where there is no direct target, such as Islamophobic graffiti or a comment thrown across a room, are treated seriously.

Any incident which is perceived to be Islamophobic must be investigated, but the most common Islamophobic incidents take the form of:

- Islamophobic language
- ridicule and offensive jokes
- verbal abuse
- physical assault
- graffiti or damage to property
- discriminatory behaviour e.g. refusing to work with a young person because of their religion
- incitement to behave in a Islamophobic manner, e.g. wearing Islamophobic badges, recruiting to Islamophobic organisations, bringing in Islamophobic literature.
- cyber bullying

Recording Islamophobic Incidents

It is important that you have a robust, centralised system in place in the school to record incidents, which is overseen by a designated member of the senior management team. All staff should receive training which outlines why the school is recording this information, the procedures that they need to follow and why it is important to record every prejudice-related incident that they or their young people experience or witness. Incidents should be recorded within an agreed timescale, for example, two working days.

You need to keep a record of all the incidents that have occurred and the action taken. The member of staff who oversees the system should be responsible for:

- determining immediate and future action
- ensuring that staff and young people receive appropriate support
- monitoring prejudice-related incidents
- measuring the effectiveness of recording methods used

Mechanisms for recording prejudice-related incidents should be kept separate from mechanisms for recording behavioural incidents.

There is a sample prejudice-related incident recording form with guidance available to download from www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us

It is important to differentiate between these as not all prejudice-related incidents should result in punishment for the perpetrator. Behaviour policies can be drawn on if punishment is an effective outcome to the incident, but this won't always be the case. Often, especially if an incident is proven to be unintentional, education for the perpetrator might be a more suitable outcome.

For the recording system to be effective, it is important that the information recorded provides a level of detail which is useful when interrogating the data to inform future strategies. This should include the level of severity of the incident. A scale suggested by INSTED consultancy is outlined below:

1. No offence was intended or taken.
2. Hurt or distress was caused, but the offending behaviour is unlikely to be repeated.
3. Hurt or distress was caused, and the pupil(s) responsible had previously been warned that their behaviour was unacceptable.
4. Substantial hurt or distress was caused, and/or the behaviour was based on substantial hostility and prejudice, and/or the behaviour may be repeated (Richardson, 2012)

Pupil Voice

Teachers and other school staff may not always be aware of Islamophobic behaviour in the school as perpetrators often take care not to display this behaviour in front of staff and young people on the receiving end may be afraid to report it for fear of being labelled a grass, being dismissed or making the situation worse.

You can help to mitigate against this by creating a positive ethos where young people are encouraged to speak up and know that the school will deal with issues effectively. You can also create systems of peer support, so that others can report incidents to staff rather than the target always having to be the one that comes forward.

It is also useful to create opportunities for young people to report incidents anonymously, by creating systems where young people can submit notes about their experiences or by including questions about Islamophobia in student surveys.

School Policies and Procedures

It is good practice for schools to have a robust equality policy which links in with other school policies and guidance. The policy should have explicit mention of the school's approach to prejudice-related incidents and where full guidance of how to identify, record and respond to prejudice-related incidents can be found. Guidance on identifying, recording and responding to prejudice-related incidents should be separate from, but link with, anti-bullying, behaviour and other school policies to allow a holistic approach to dealing with inappropriate behaviour.

All schools are expected to have a home-school agreement which is signed by parents/carers and, when they are old enough, the pupils themselves. Your school's values and commitment to promoting equality, eliminating discrimination and fostering good relations should be clearly outlined in this agreement. Then, if an incident occurs, the parents/carers are aware of the school's expectations and that they are expected to work with the school to resolve the issue.

A model equality, diversity and cohesion policy and a model home-school agreement can be downloaded here: <http://www.equaliteach.co.uk/our-work/#Resources>

Guidelines for Dealing with Islamophobic Incidents

The following guidelines are designed to aid staff members to deal with Islamophobic incidents which occur between pupils, between staff, and between staff and pupils.

Immediate Action:

- Treat the issue seriously - remember that someone's perception is their reality at the time, and that incidents should not be dismissed and/or ignored.
- Respond immediately - acknowledge that the incident has happened, express disapproval at the Islamophobic behaviour and offer support to the target of the incident.
- Reinforce the school's position on discrimination and prejudice.
- Focus on the perpetrator's behaviour, rather than the person, making sure that they know that the behaviour is not acceptable.
- Ensure that witnesses know what behaviour is not acceptable and the reasons why.



Investigation:

- Inform relevant members of the senior management team.
- Inform parents/carers.
- Ensure that both perpetrator and target have a fair hearing and are given the opportunity separately to fully explain the incident, ensuring privacy for discussion, and using a calm and non-confrontational approach.
- Address underlying issues, for example, an incident may not be Islamophobic in origin, instead it might be a dispute over resources in which Islamophobic abuse has been used, in which case the original issue should be resolved as well as the unacceptable behaviour that made it an Islamophobic incident.
- Approach witnesses for written statements to inform the investigation.
- Bring both parties together to give them a chance to be involved in resolving the situation.
- Ensure that all parties understand what is being done to address the incident and the reasons behind this.
- Ensure that the prejudice is dealt with - this requires an ability to explain why the incident was Islamophobic if the investigation proves it to be. If the incident is proven not to be Islamophobic, ensure that the reasons why are explained to all parties involved.
- Ensure that actions taken are in line with the relevant policies in place at the school.

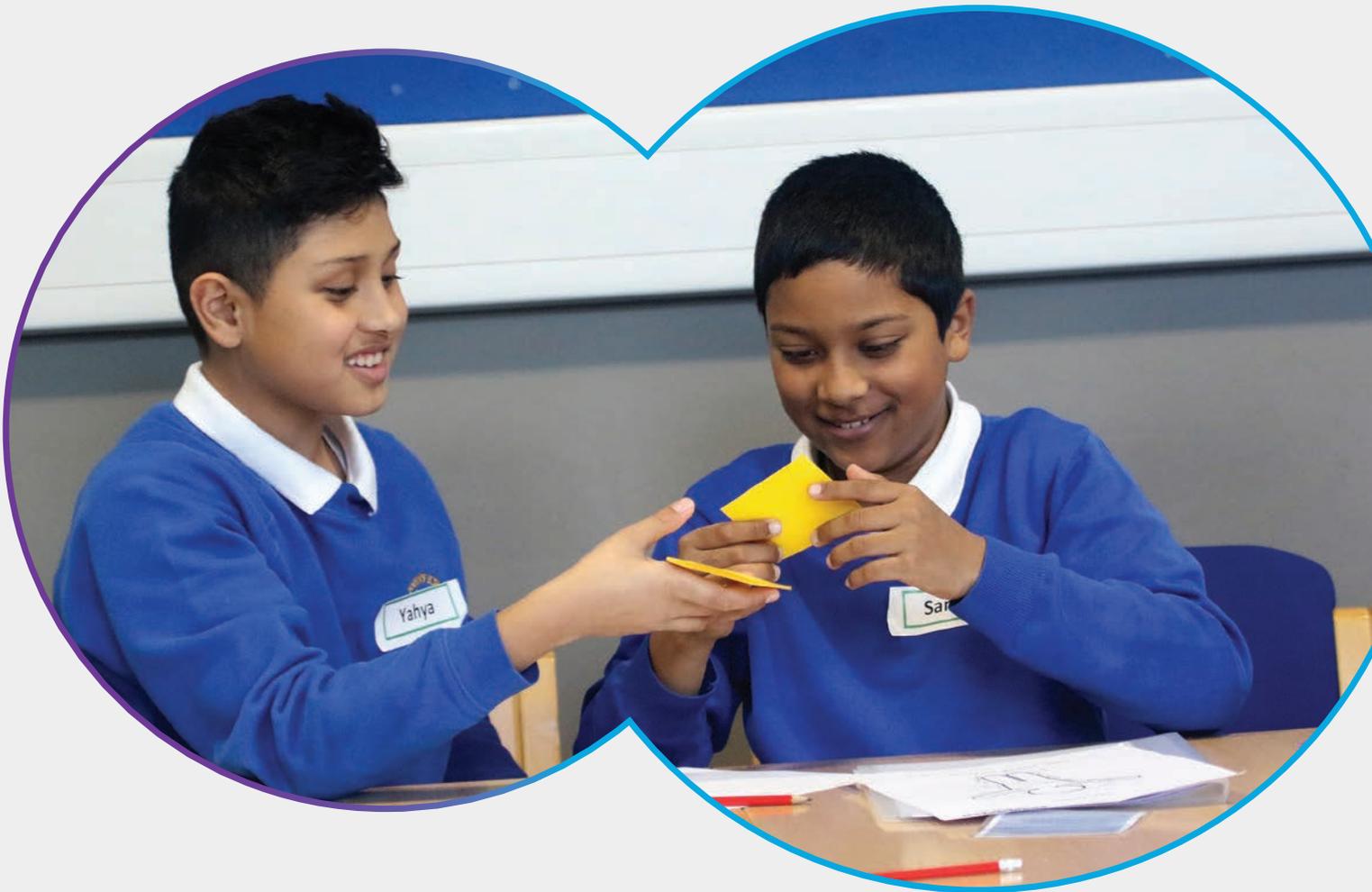
Longer Term Response:

- Agree follow up meetings with the perpetrator and target after an agreed time period, for example, one or two weeks, to inform them of further actions taken and provide opportunities for additional support if required.
- Provide relevant training/programmes of education on prejudice and discrimination.
- Give the perpetrator the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions and to take action to try to repair the harm that they have caused.
- Work with other agencies and the community to foster good relations within the school.
- Share incident monitoring reports with staff to ensure relevant discussion and development of good practice.
- Reinforce the school's position on equality and diversity.
- Targets and parents have a right to refer cases to the police and all parties have a right to appeal to the Governing Body.

Roles and Responsibilities

<p>Governors</p>	<p>Ensuring that schools comply with equality legislation: there should be a dedicated member of the board who leads on equalities.</p> <p>Setting and monitoring progress towards equality objectives in partnership with the senior management team.</p>
<p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Ensuring that there are effective policies, procedures, recording and reporting systems in place.</p> <p>Providing training and ensuring that all staff, pupils and parents are aware of their responsibilities.</p> <p>Ensuring that all prejudice-related incidents are dealt with effectively: there should be a dedicated member of the senior management team with responsibility for dealing with prejudice-related incidents.</p> <p>Reporting to the board of governors.</p> <p>Monitoring the effectiveness of policies, procedures and curriculum responses.</p> <p>Setting and monitoring equality objectives in partnership with the board of governors.</p>
<p>Teachers</p>	<p>Challenging prejudicial attitudes and behaviours, complying with school policies, promoting equality and implementing curriculum responses where necessary, modelling good practice, and reporting incidents when they occur.</p>
<p>Support Staff, including teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors, kitchen staff, reception staff, IT technicians, site managers.</p>	<p>Challenging prejudicial attitudes and behaviours, complying with school policies, modelling good practice, and reporting incidents when they occur.</p>
<p>Pupils</p>	<p>Signing up to the school's values (where appropriate), taking responsibility for their own behaviour, supporting the targets of prejudice, and reporting incidents to staff.</p>

<p>Parents/Carers</p>	<p>Signing up to the school's values and understanding the behaviour expected from their child. Working with the school to ensure the best possible outcomes should their child be involved in an incident.</p>
<p>Partner Agencies</p>	<p>External organisations can support the school through the provision of training for staff and students and providing support for targets and perpetrators.</p> <p>Local Authority Equality Officers/Hate Crime teams can provide support.</p> <p>Police Community Support Officers and School Liaison Officers can work holistically with the school to help reduce anti-social behaviour and hate crime. They can also support all parties should an incident be considered a hate crime and pursued through the courts.</p>



There is a more in-depth look at recognising and responding to prejudice-related incidents, including case studies, in our resource *Equally Safe*, available at: <http://www.equaliteach.co.uk/our-work/#Resources>