# School struggles to support pupils amid rising racism allegations and lack of staff training



Standing at the entrance of the school, Fabien McQuillan felt an unsettling mix of parental concern and unease familiar to many. Pressing the buzzer with an exaggerated motion, reminiscent of a fervent football fan, he noticed two teachers in the staff room, immersed in their conversation, oblivious to him. The absence of a warm greeting contrasted sharply with the gravity of the situation at hand—his daughter Imogen had been accused of racism in a context that should have fostered understanding and inclusivity.

After a lengthy wait, the school secretary finally let him in with a curt, impassive greeting that did little to alleviate his anxiety. Awaiting the outcome alongside other anxious parents, McQuillan could see Imogen through the window, visibly distressed. He felt a surge of protective anger; it was disheartening to imagine that a child, so innocent at heart, could be embroiled in such serious allegations. The situation brought back echoes of his own childhood, particularly his first day in school where innocence and folly coexisted.

As tensions heightened in the principal's office, the atmosphere reflected the wider issues prevalent in educational settings around racial dynamics. According to a YMCA report, 95% of young Black British individuals reported encountering racist language in schools, with many suffering from the consequences of a systemic lack of support. Over half of the male respondents noted experiencing such language frequently, while almost half of those surveyed viewed racism as a key barrier to their academic success.

The reality of these statistics hit home for McQuillan when the principal addressed the incident with grave concern, attempting to assure the parents that the matter would be dealt with decisively. Tensions escalated when he pressed for clarity. “Did Imogen call anyone a name?” he queried, sensing an immediate defensive posture from the school’s staff. Repeated assurances that his daughter was innocent were met with hesitation—a reflexive response that spoke volumes about societal biases, even in educational institutions meant to protect and guide.

The narrative of children's experiences in schools across the UK reveals a significant disconnect between the lived realities of students and the attitudes of educators. It is telling that only 31% of racial bullying incidents are reported to authorities, reflecting an alarming culture of silence that continues to hinder open dialogues around racism in schools. Many educators feel inadequately equipped to handle such challenges, with 67% admitting they lack the necessary training to manage racial bullying effectively.

Imogen's story is not an isolated case. Recent statistics have shown a worrying increase in suspensions related to racist abuse, with over 11,600 incidents reported in England during the 2022-2023 academic year alone. This trend mirrors broader patterns observed nationally, where the prevalence of racial abuse is alarmingly close to incidents of general bullying within educational environments.

After the meeting, as Imogen and her father returned home, the comforting sanctum of their living room awaited, complete with familiar treasures like Captain Underpants and sweet treats. McQuillan reassured his daughter, affirming her bravery, ultimately framing the experience as an opportunity for growth rather than shame. “You were brave. Like a hero,” he told her, fostering resilience amidst the confusion. “A superhero,” she replied, a child’s simple acknowledgment of her courage against the unjust circumstances thrust upon her.

As dialogue around racism continues to evolve, it is imperative that schools adopt robust anti-bullying frameworks that inclusively address all forms of intolerance. Only then can we hope to provide a safe and nurturing educational environment for all children, allowing them to flourish free from prejudice and stigmatisation.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/did-anyone-call-for-a-racism-fighting-schoolgirl-superhero-BUAJDR5NBFHNBFFHBBOOIHYLUI/), [[2]](https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/11/racism-united-kingdom-schools-black-children-inequality/), [[3]](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2023-0049/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/11/racism-united-kingdom-schools-black-children-inequality/), [[4]](https://gitnux.org/racism-bullying-statistics/), [[5]](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/absence-and-exclusions/pupil-exclusions/latest/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2023-0049/), [[6]](https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/people/racial-abuse-is-almost-as-frequent-as-bullying-in-milton-keynes-schools-data-reveals-4627628), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/28/uk-schools-record-more-than-60000-racist-incidents-five-years)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/did-anyone-call-for-a-racism-fighting-schoolgirl-superhero-BUAJDR5NBFHNBFFHBBOOIHYLUI/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/11/racism-united-kingdom-schools-black-children-inequality/> - A YMCA report reveals that 95% of young Black British individuals have encountered racist language in educational settings. Over half of male respondents reported hearing such language 'all the time'. Additionally, 49% believe racism is the primary barrier to academic success, while 50% feel that teacher perceptions hinder their achievements. The study also highlights that 70% of young Black British people have felt compelled to alter their hair to appear 'more professional' in school or work environments.
3. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2023-0049/> - An October 2020 YMCA report indicates that 95% of young Black individuals in the UK have heard or witnessed racist language in schools. Furthermore, 49% view racism as the main obstacle to academic success, and 50% attribute their challenges to teacher perceptions. The report also notes that 70% have felt the need to change their hair to be deemed 'more professional' in educational or professional settings.
4. <https://gitnux.org/racism-bullying-statistics/> - Statistics on racial bullying in schools reveal that only 31% of such incidents are reported to authorities. Additionally, 42% of students believe their schools are insufficiently addressing racial bullying, and 67% of teachers feel unprepared to handle these issues effectively. Implementing anti-bullying programs focusing on race has led to a 25% reduction in incidents, yet only 18% of victims receive counseling or support services.
5. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/absence-and-exclusions/pupil-exclusions/latest/> - Data from the 2022-2023 school year in England shows that 1.3% of suspensions were due to racist abuse, amounting to 11,619 incidents. The breakdown by ethnicity indicates that 2.9% of suspensions for Asian pupils, 1.8% for Black pupils, 1.4% for Mixed pupils, and 1.1% for White pupils were related to racist abuse. This highlights the prevalence of racial issues within the school environment.
6. <https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/people/racial-abuse-is-almost-as-frequent-as-bullying-in-milton-keynes-schools-data-reveals-4627628> - An investigation into Milton Keynes schools reveals that suspensions for racial abuse are nearly as frequent as those for bullying. During the 2022-2023 spring term, there were 22 suspensions for racial abuse, compared to 25 for bullying. This trend mirrors a national increase, with 3,779 suspensions for racial abuse recorded across English schools, marking a 21% rise from the previous year.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/28/uk-schools-record-more-than-60000-racist-incidents-five-years> - Over a five-year period, UK schools documented more than 60,000 racist incidents. However, following government guidance in 2012 and 2017, many schools ceased reporting these incidents to local education authorities, leading to a significant decline in recorded data. This lack of reporting has hindered efforts to address and combat racism within educational institutions.