# Man arrested after racially aggravated incident at Newport primary school amid wider concerns over racism in Welsh education



A man has been arrested on suspicion of a racially aggravated public order offence following an altercation in the car park of Glan Usk Primary School in Newport. The incident unfolded around 9.10am during the busy morning school drop-off period, prompting swift action by Gwent Police, who responded to reports of a verbal conflict between two men. The suspect, a 53-year-old man from the Newport area, is currently in police custody.

In a message to parents shortly after the incident, headteacher Mrs Roberts reassured the school community by thanking those who assisted in maintaining safety and commended the police for their prompt response. "The member of public that caused concern near the school site has been dealt with by the police and is receiving the support they need,” she stated, aiming to alleviate fears and affirm the school’s commitment to safety and security.

This incident comes against the backdrop of growing concerns surrounding racism in educational environments across Wales. Recent investigations have revealed that incidents of racist abuse are alarmingly common in schools, a situation described as increasingly normalised among students. According to a report by the children's commissioner for Wales, young people have shared experiences ranging from verbal abuse to more serious incidents involving physical aggression. One affected student noted, “There was always something every day to be honest...in terms of little things. People being very uneducated—whether they mean it or not.”

The prevalence of racism in schools has been corroborated through various studies, including a significant research project commissioned by the Gwent Safeguarding Board, which indicated that actual incidents were likely underreported. Gareth Jenkins, co-chair of the Board, acknowledged the disturbing findings and expressed a collective commitment from all five councils in the region to foster a more inclusive educational environment.

Adding to these troubling revelations, testimonies from students highlight a troubling trend of deeply ingrained attitudes that lead to racist language and actions. Young individuals reportedly face extreme forms of abuse, including derogatory remarks and unwanted physical contact, often with little intervention from educators. For instance, a Muslim girl was subjected to a horrific comment alleging she was “hiding a bomb in her scarf,” while another student recounted being told: “I don’t want to sit next to you because of your skin colour.”

The issue extends beyond primary education, as findings have shown that children as young as three are increasingly exposed to racial prejudice within school settings. Uzo Iwobi, founder of Race Council Cymru, reported a shocking number of incidents, with schools across Wales documenting rising trends in both verbal and physical abuse related to racism. The ramifications of such early exposure to hatred are concerning; psychological experts warn that these experiences can inflict lasting harm on young people's mental health and overall development.

While the Welsh Government has made promises to address these issues through its anti-racist Wales action plan, confidence among many communities remains low, with reports indicating that individuals are often reluctant to report incidents due to fears of inaction or retaliation.

As local communities and educational authorities grapple with the implications of these recent incidents, the hope is that swift and meaningful actions can be taken to address systemic racism in schools, ensuring that no child feels threatened or marginalised within their educational journey. The need for better education on diversity, coupled with a robust support system, is imperative for fostering a more inclusive atmosphere for all students as communities work to combat these deeply entrenched issues.

### Reference Map

1. Details of the incident and police response.
2. Concerns about racist incidents in schools.
3. Findings from the children's commissioner regarding racist abuse.
4. Gwent Safeguarding Board's report on underreporting of racism.
5. Testimonies from students about their experiences.
6. The rise of racism in educational settings.
7. The broader implications of racism in Wales' education system.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25157180.man-arrested-suspicion-racially-aggravated-incident/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwy89wgzwl3o> - An investigation has been launched after two signs were tied to railings outside a primary school in County Armagh. Police received a report of the signs erected outside of the school on Pollock Drive in Lurgan on Monday evening. Supt Brendan Green said officers have since removed the posters, and are treating the incident as a hate crime. The signs, which were attached to the outside of the gate, contained an anti-Islam sentiment and the words: 'Local homes for local people'. 'As our investigation progresses we will continue to engage with local community representatives and partner agencies,' he added. Anyone with information about the signs has been asked to contact police.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-67546071> - A new report by the children's commissioner for Wales said racist abuse happened regularly in schools and was 'being normalised' by students. The Welsh government said it would 'carefully consider' recommendations. Bowen, who is now studying for his A-levels in college, said his school 'did know how to deal with it' when he was racially abused, and the incidents made him more resilient. He felt that not enough people were educated on hurtful and racist language, adding: 'There was always something every day to be honest. Not something as big as what I just told you but little things. People being very uneducated - whether they mean it or not.' Bowen was not alone - the report highlighted cases of a Muslim girl being told 'you're hiding a bomb in your scarf' and another girl being left in tears after her hijab was pulled off. Other children said they had been called a terrorist and one child was told by another that they did not want to sit by them because of their skin colour. Children said they felt racism was not taken seriously and some feared retaliation if they reported it.
4. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/24144279.racism-schools-review-newport-caerphilly-gwent/> - Racism in Gwent schools has been put under the spotlight after 'heart-wrenching' evidence was found in an investigation. Gwent Safeguarding Board has commissioned a research project to explore experiences of racism and racist bullying to find out the reasons why learners in the five local authority areas are under-reporting or failing to report incidents of racism or racist incidents that occur within their school environment. All five councils in Gwent participated in the work and have accepted the recommendations in the report. Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen were compliant with policies and best practice guidelines in relation to the reporting of racist incidents in schools. However, it was felt that it was unlikely that the number of reports reflected the actual numbers that occurred and gave a true picture of what was being experienced by children and young people. The research team also involved teachers Leon Andrews, Batool Akmal and Gemma Maiorano. Gareth Jenkins, co-chair of Gwent Safeguarding Board, said: 'It confirmed our concerns that incidents are under-reported and, more importantly, uncovered some of the reasons that might happen. The views expressed by the children and young people, and staff, were sometimes extremely upsetting and always sobering. This is not about pointing fingers but about learning how things can be improved to ensure our schools are safer and more inclusive for everyone. All five councils have welcomed the report and are united in that ambition and this report will help them to ensure anti-racism is further embedded in the ethos of schools and everything they do.'
5. <https://wrexham.com/news/children-as-young-as-three-increasingly-facing-racism-fuelled-physical-and-verbal-attacks-in-wales-243300.html> - Children as young as three-years-old are involved in racism with prejudice on the rise in Wales’ schools, MSs heard. The Senedd’s equality committee took evidence from Race Council Cymru and Cardiff University as part of an inquiry on the Welsh Government’s anti-racist Wales action plan. Uzo Iwobi, founder and chief executive of Race Council Cymru, told MSs that children are increasingly facing racism-fuelled physical and verbal attacks while at school. She said: 'In one week, we had 15 phone calls from schools across Wales narrating different incidences of racism involving children as young as three, which is horrific.' Prof Iwobi stressed that racism is learned behaviour as she highlighted the need to educate parents as well as pupils. She added: 'One of the little girls refused to come to school because she had been told she should live on a tree because her family looked like monkeys or some words to that effect.' Hate crime Prof Iwobi warned that official rates of reporting of hate crime have dropped while contacts with charities, such as Race Council Cymru, have significantly increased. The barrister and law lecturer told MSs that communities do not have confidence in the police, saying people have reported incidents in the past but nothing has changed. She recalled a vicious attack on a 14-year-old boy outside school by two white children, which parents did not want to report to authorities. 'Many people are beginning to feel like this is everyday racism,' she said. 'This happens to us time and time and time again.' She added that Race Council Cymru was advised to cancel black history celebrations in Llanelli this year due to the negative reception of asylum seekers. Religion Prof Iwobi raised concerns about a significant increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia due to the Israel-Gaza war. She told the committee that women wearing Hijabs in particular are increasingly facing hate, citing the example of a Muslim who was egged on the streets of Cardiff last week.
6. <https://www.gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-evidence-report-kiran-cymru-html> - The Anti-racist Wales evidence report, published by KIRAN Cymru, provides detailed data on incidents of racism in Wales, including variables such as case number, file number, sex, place, ethnicity, and dates. The report includes a list of variables and themes and codes related to racism in general, such as racism on the bus, in public transport, faced by family, and in the community. It also covers specific incidents like derogatory notes on doorsteps, graffiti, threat mail, and experiences of racism in schools, communities, and public spaces. The report aims to shed light on the prevalence and nature of racism in Wales, providing valuable insights for policymakers and communities to address these issues effectively.
7. <https://voice.cymru/exposed-the-reality-of-racism-in-wales-education-system/> - This article assesses experiences of racism at different stages of the education system in Wales, highlighting how these experiences change throughout an individual’s educational journey. It discusses instances of name-calling, being the only child not invited to birthday parties, and a sense of being 'othered' from a young age. In secondary schools, students experienced more intentional name-calling with racial slurs and instances of Islamophobia, such as having hijabs pulled off and being referred to as 'Terrorists', 'Bombers', and 'Extremists'. The article also highlights examples of institutional racism, including biased assessments and restrictions on communication in mother tongues. The report underscores the lasting and often traumatic impact of multiple and repeated experiences of racism on young people, affecting their long-term mental health, identity, and future aspirations. It also points out the lack of effective intervention by schools in addressing these issues.