

## Downs Infant School Black History Month



We might say a person is 'white' or 'black' but is anyone really white or black?

We all have different skin tones, but most of them are simply slightly different shades of, for example, brown or pink.

Encourage children to explore their colour vocabulary and ask children what they are happy using to describe their skin and hair.

For some people 'Black' and 'White' are important labels for their identity, and this should be respected.

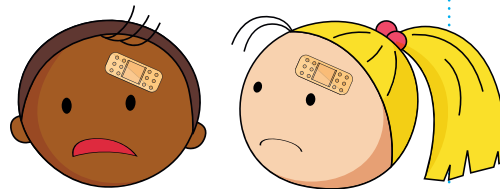


### Other tips for dealing with difficult questions:

Skin colour tends to correspond with local UV radiation levels, so that people with ancestors from the tropics tend to have darker skin, but skin colour does not correlate with any other characteristics.

Racism is a system of disadvantage that is in place because certain ethnicities incorrectly considered that they were superior from some other people.

White privilege is not the lack of struggle, but absence of racism. E.g. never having to wonder why a skin coloured plaster is pink.



Someone's ethnicity may not be the same as their nationality. For example, a child may have African origins and be living in England with a British passport and identify as British.



## Talking with your child about race

*We welcome contact from any parents/carers who would like to discuss anything contained in this leaflet.*



Giving children tools to talk about people's differences and similarities in an open, non judgemental, inquisitive way can help them address any unfairness they may see or encounter. In school we will be talking about important black figures in history and black role models, we will look at skin – in all its colours – and how to look after it, we will celebrate our different hair and skin and read stories that celebrate black histories and heritage.

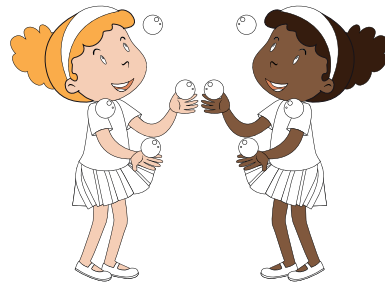
We hope this sheet will help you continue the discussions at home.

## Pre-school age

Toddlers' view of the world is very egocentric; they believe other people are the same as them. They can be puzzled as to why other children or adults don't look like them.

They are very curious and trying to make sense of the world, so the messages their adults send out are very important: how do you respond to others?

It's important at this age to work on a child's self esteem so they are confident and also have a healthy curiosity and are open minded and accepting of others.



- Make it OK to ask questions.
- Talk about 'fair'/'unfair' and challenge stereotypes.
- Foster healthy pride in racial identity.
- Introduce diverse books and toys.
- Learn about your own biases and assumptions.

## Ages 4-6

Children begin to feel a sense of belonging to groups besides their families. They start to be aware they can exclude people from their groups or be/feel excluded from groups. Fitting in becomes more important. They want to know more about the groups they 'belong' to and develop pride in them. This is not in itself the start of prejudice, but their sense of discrimination against groups or being/feeling discriminated from groups can be heightened. Children may start to hide parts of themselves if they don't feel they fit in.

Maintain diversity in toys and books – research shows both white and black children show a preference for white dolls as being 'prettier' and views get fixed very early on. Emphasizing in a playful manner that all dolls are equally pretty can help prevent these views.

If your child plays in mixed-race groups, don't be 'colour blind' – it's still important to talk about race and racism.



- Question and actively challenge negative views and stereotypes in books, on TV etc.
- Be mindful of your own implicit and overt actions and words.
- Use family stories and intergenerational narratives to inspire pride in their own culture and heritage.
- Talk about privilege and how that affects how people are treated in society.
- Teach children not to dismiss other people's experience of racism, but be respectful of their feelings.
- Help children understand that racism is much more than just someone being mean or rude.
- Empower with role play, tools and strategies to counter any racism they may encounter (as victim or bystander).
- Have open-ended conversations to help you understand how they see themselves and others.
- Ask questions such as, 'What makes you special?' so that children can explore self identity.