Safe
Strong
Free

Stronger Together Toolkit

A practical resource to help schools and community groups tackle bullying and racism, celebrate differences, and embed inclusion in everyday life.

The Stronger Together Toolkit has been welcomed and supported by national and local partners who recognise its focus on prevention, inclusion and early intervention. The following statements reflect the shared commitment to creating safer, kinder and more inclusive environments for children and young people.

"As the Head of the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU), I am proud to offer my full support for the Stronger Together Toolkit. At the SVRU, we understand that violence is preventable, not inevitable, and that the foundations for a safer Scotland are built in our schools and communities through early intervention and the promotion of inclusion. This toolkit provides a vital, evidence-informed framework for tackling the root causes of harm, such as bullying, racism, and discrimination. By moving beyond one-off initiatives and embedding kindness, respect, and anti-racism into everyday practice, it empowers both staff and young people to co-create environments where every child feels they belong. Its alignment with national guidance like Respect for All and GIRFEC ensures it is a robust resource for sustained culture change. I very much look forward to seeing the application of this toolkit in future years."

Jimmy Paul
Head of the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit

"Safe Strong & Free worked brilliantly with our Primary 5 and 5–6 class. The presenters were engaging, compassionate, and created a safe space for pupils to explore identity, cultural diversity, and respect. The session encouraged open discussion and helped strengthen understanding around racism and inclusion."

Teacher

"I am very happy to support the launch of Safe Strong & Free's Stronger Together Toolkit. Helping children and young people feel safe, respected and included must start early, and this toolkit offers practical and positive ways for schools and community to do exactly that.

In the Highlands, where schools and communities are often closely connected, this kind of early, preventative work can make a real difference. I support encouraging kindness, respect and speaking up about bullying, discrimination and racism. I particularly welcome the focus on listening to pupils, building trust with adults and working with families, which is essential in creating environments where every child feels they belong and can thrive.

This is a positive step towards safer, kinder and more inclusive communities for children and young people across the Highlands."

Ariane Burgess MSP

"I am pleased to support the launch of Stronger Together, a significant and timely resource dedicated to early intervention, prevention, and the promotion of positive, respectful relationships.

I am particularly encouraged that the toolkit has been shaped through local pilots and partnership working, involving young people themselves. This helps ensure the resource is practical, responsive and grounded in the real experiences of the young people it is designed to support.

I am grateful to all those involved in the development of this toolkit and look forward to seeing the positive difference it will make for young people in my constituency and across the Highlands."

Maree Todd MSP

"The title of this project says it all – we are stronger together. That strength comes from understanding our differences and choosing to celebrate them. Our communities have always been diverse, shaped by many cultures, traditions, and identities. However, a lack of education can lead to fear and misinformation, especially around topics such as race, culture, and heritage.

This project has shown how children and adults celebrate what matters to them. The Stronger Together Toolkit helps build understanding, respect, and belonging, and prepares young people to engage with the wider world with empathy, confidence, and openness."

Elizabeth-Mya Chemonges-Murzynowska
ACAMHA

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CEO Statement

Stronger Together has been developed to support schools and communities across Scotland to embed inclusion, prevent bullying and racism, and uphold children's rights in everyday practice. Grounded in evidence and shaped through partnership, this toolkit reflects Safe Strong & Free's commitment to prevention. It is designed to support staff and young people to work together to build positive cultures where every child feels safe, respected and included.

Kerry Lowe
Chief Executive Officer
Safe Strong & Free

01

Introduction

Stronger Together is a practical resource for schools, youth groups and communities, designed to help create environments where every child and young person feels safe, included and respected. The toolkit focuses on preventing bullying, addressing discrimination and racism, building empathy and allyship, and celebrating diversity.

Developed by Safe Strong & Free with contributions from external partners, Stronger Together brings together evidence-informed tools to support staff and pupils in creating positive, inclusive cultures across whole-school and community settings. It is designed for teachers and support staff, senior leaders, youth workers, and leadership programme groups. Its purpose is simple: to embed kindness, respect, anti-racism and inclusion into everyday practice, rather than treating them as one-off activities or initiatives.

Why Stronger Together?

Children and young people learn and thrive in environments where they feel valued, respected, and able to be themselves. When bullying, racism or discrimination occurs, even in subtle or unintentional ways, it can undermine confidence and wellbeing, damage relationships, reduce engagement and attainment, and weaken a child's sense of safety and belonging. Left unaddressed, these experiences can shape how children see themselves and their place within school or community life.

Early preventative work plays a crucial role in addressing these impacts. Stronger Together supports schools and communities to respond consistently to harm, strengthen positive relationships, and equip pupils with safe, age-appropriate ways to challenge unfair behaviour and participate meaningfully in shaping inclusive, respectful environments. Grounded in prevention, early intervention and partnership, the approach enables adults and pupils to work together to create inclusive, respectful learning environments.

What's Included

The toolkit provides flexible resources you can use across a full year or individual sessions.

Teaching and Learning

- Primary and secondary lesson plans
- Activities exploring kindness, diversity, identity and racism
- Scenarios and scripts for responding to bullying

Leadership Programme

- Inclusion Ambassadors Programme
- Inclusive project ideas and campaigns

Whole-School Development

- Leadership and classroom audits
- Action planning templates
- Guidance on responding to bullying and racism
- Community engagement activities

Evaluation and Recognition

- Pupil and staff evaluation tools
- Progress tracking
- Stronger Together Award Pathway: **Bronze, Silver, Gold**

How to Use This Toolkit

You can tailor Stronger Together to suit your setting:

Whole-School Approach

Stronger Together can be embedded across the whole school by aligning inclusion with policies, assemblies, curriculum planning, staff learning, displays and pupil-voice structures. This approach supports consistency, shared expectations and long-term culture change.

Targeted Approach

Some settings may choose to use the toolkit with specific year groups, ambassador teams, transition cohorts or identified classes. This allows focused work while still contributing to wider school improvement.

Classroom Approach

Lessons can be delivered within Health and Wellbeing, RME, literacy, social subjects or PSE/tutor time, making inclusion part of everyday learning rather than an additional burden.

Community Approach

Schools and youth settings can strengthen belonging by using the toolkit to support cultural events, creative activities, partnerships with local organisations and family engagement.

Age-Appropriate Design

Activities are developmentally appropriate, with primary sessions focusing on kindness, fairness and early allyship, and secondary learning encouraging discussion around identity, discrimination, microaggressions and challenging racism safely.

Why Inclusion Matters

Inclusion matters because it shapes how safe, confident and connected children and young people feel within their school or community. Inclusive environments reduce bullying and discriminatory behaviour, strengthen relationships and peer support, and support positive wellbeing and mental health. When children feel that they belong, they are more likely to engage in learning, attend regularly, participate confidently and develop positive relationships with others.

Inclusion is not created through policies alone. It is built through everyday interactions, the language adults use, the routines that are modelled, the relationships that are nurtured, the representation children see around them and the experiences offered through the curriculum. Stronger Together supports schools and communities to make inclusion intentional, visible and embedded in daily practice, so that every child feels valued, respected and able to thrive.

Our Approach and Framework

Stronger Together is grounded in Safe Strong & Free's established prevention model, developed through years of work supporting children, families and education settings. The approach focuses on early, proactive learning that equips children and young people with the understanding, language and strategies they need to navigate difference, challenge harm safely and build positive relationships. It recognises that prevention is most effective when messages are clear, consistent and reinforced over time.

Central to the approach is the importance of strong, trusting relationships between adults and pupils. Children are more likely to speak up, seek help and support one another when they feel listened to, respected and believed. Stronger Together also places emphasis on partnership with families and communities, recognising that inclusive values are strengthened when children see them reflected beyond the classroom. By building resilience, confidence and pupil voice, the approach aims to reduce vulnerability and support long-term wellbeing.

Stronger Together is guided by four core principles that underpin all activities and guidance within the toolkit. These principles focus on kindness and respect as the foundation for healthy relationships; inclusion and diversity as strengths to be recognised and valued; the consistent challenging of bullying, discrimination and racism, including subtle or everyday forms of harm; and the promotion of allyship and positive action, empowering children and young people to be upstanders who take safe, constructive steps to support others and seek help when needed.

Core Principles

Kindness and Respect

Using language and behaviour that protects dignity and strengthens relationships.

Inclusion and Diversity

Celebrating different cultures, identities, experiences and perspectives.

Challenging Bullying, Discrimination and Racism

Recognising harmful behaviour – from obvious incidents to microaggressions –and responding consistently.

Allyship and Positive Action

Supporting young people to be upstanders: taking safe action to support others, speak up and seek help.

Alignment with National Guidance

National Framework	How Stronger Together Aligns
Respect for All (2024)	Supports preventative anti-bullying practice, consistent responses to harm, pupil participation and whole-school culture change.
GIRFEC	Promotes wellbeing across all SHANARRI indicators by strengthening relationships, safety, participation and emotional wellbeing.
Equality Act 2010	Helps schools prevent discrimination, challenge bias and foster positive relationships.
UNCRC Incorporation (Scotland)	Upholds children's rights to be safe, heard, treated fairly, express identity and learn in inclusive environments.
Education Scotland – Anti-Racist Curriculum Framework	Provides practical, age-appropriate approaches to embedding anti-racism across learning and teaching.

Safeguarding

All activities must be delivered in line with the setting's existing child protection and safeguarding procedures. Any disclosures or concerns should be recorded and reported through agreed processes and passed to the designated safeguarding lead. Inclusion Ambassadors are not responsible for managing incidents or disclosures and must seek adult support when concerns arise.

Stronger Together is rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The toolkit promotes every child's right to feel safe, be respected, be heard and be included.

All activities and approaches are designed to help schools and settings create environments where children and young people can participate, belong and thrive.

02

Lesson Plans

Safeguarding Note for Staff

These lessons may prompt pupils to share personal experiences. If a pupil discloses bullying, racism, discrimination or harm that is ongoing, serious, or affecting their safety or wellbeing, staff must follow their school or setting's safeguarding and child-protection procedures. Pupils should be reminded that adults cannot keep secrets if someone is not safe, and that sharing concerns helps keep everyone safe.

Lesson Plan 1

Understanding and Responding to Bullying

Programme: Stronger Together
Duration: 60 minutes (flexible)
Setting: School / Youth / Community
Age Group: Upper Primary / Secondary (adaptable)

Purpose of the Session

This session helps children and young people understand what bullying is, why it happens, how it affects people, and how to respond safely. The focus is on prevention, empathy, and knowing when and how to get help.

Learning Intentions

Learners will:

- Understand what bullying is and how it differs from everyday conflict
- Recognise different types of bullying behaviour and explore why some people bully, without excusing the behaviour
- Understand the impact of bullying on individuals and communities
- Learn safe ways to respond and where to get help

Starter

10 minutes

Place signs in the room:

Agree

Disagree

Read statements aloud. Pupils move to the sign that matches their view:

- "Bullying has to happen more than once"
- "Online bullying can be worse than face-to-face bullying"
- "Ignoring bullying makes it stop"
- "Telling an adult makes things worse"
- "Bullying is just part of growing up"

Discussion

Ask pupils: "Why did you choose that?", "Did anyone change their mind?" Remind pupils there are no right or wrong answers – the goal is thinking and discussion.

Key Message

Bullying is about harm and impact, not how many times something happens.

Scottish Government definition of bullying

"Bullying is face-to-face and/or online behaviour which impacts on a person's sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life, and their ability to respond effectively to the situation they are in."

"The behaviour does not need to be repeated or intended to cause harm, for it to have an impact. Bullying behaviour can be physical, emotional or verbal and can cause people to feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out."

1. What Is Bullying?

10 minutes

Explain that bullying may involve:

- Intent to hurt or upset
- An imbalance of power

These features are common, but bullying can still occur even when intent or power imbalance is not obvious – impact is what matters.

Clarify the difference between bullying and conflict. Introduce different types of bullying:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Emotional
- Online
- Prejudice-based bullying

2. Why Do Some People Bully?

Integrated Discussion – 10 minutes

Explain in clear, age-appropriate language:

- People bully for different reasons.
- Bullying is a behaviour, not who someone is – and behaviour can change.

Some reasons include:

- Wanting to feel powerful or in control
- Trying to fit in or impress others
- Feeling angry, insecure, jealous, or hurt
- Copying behaviour seen online, at home, or in groups
- Struggling to manage strong emotions
- Experiencing stress or difficulties themselves

Reinforce clearly:

- None of these reasons make bullying okay
- Bullying causes harm and must be stopped

Discussion prompts (choose 2–3):

- How might someone who bullies be feeling inside?
- Does bullying solve their problem?
- What might help someone change their behaviour?
- Why is adult support important?

Keep all discussion general and hypothetical.

3. Impact of Bullying

10 minutes

Discuss how bullying can affect:

- Feelings and confidence
- Mental wellbeing
- Friendships and relationships
- Learning and sense of safety

Use emotion words and hypothetical examples.

Reinforce that bullying can have short and long-term effects. Different people can be affected in different ways by the same behaviour.

4. Responding Safely to Bullying

15 minutes

Explore safe responses:

- Staying with friends
- Walking away when possible
- Blocking and reporting online bullying
- Keeping evidence (e.g. screenshots)
- Telling a trusted adult

Introduce bystander support:

- Helping safely
- Getting adult help
- Not joining in or sharing harmful content
- Reaching out to the person experiencing bullying

Use fictional scenarios to explore:

- What is happening?
- How might the person feel?
- What safe actions could be taken?
- Who could help?

5. Trusted Adults and Getting Help

5 minutes

Ask learners to think about:

- Who their trusted adults are in school
- Who their trusted adults are outside school
- How they could ask for help

Reinforce:

- It's okay to keep telling until someone listens and helps
- Getting help is not snitching

Reflection

Choose one:

- One thing I learned today
- One safe response to bullying
- One trusted adult I could talk to is...

Participation should be adapted so that every learner can contribute in ways that work for them.

Lesson Plan 2

Understanding Racism, Discrimination and Skin Colour

Programme: Stronger Together
Duration: 60 minutes (flexible)
Setting: School / Youth / Community
Age Group: Upper Primary / Secondary (adaptable)
Developed by: ACAMHA

Purpose of the Session

This session builds on prior learning about bullying and harm by focusing specifically on racism and discrimination linked to skin colour. It supports children and young people to understand how racism can be obvious or subtle, how it affects belonging and wellbeing, and why assumptions and exclusion can cause harm even when unintentional.

This lesson prepares learners for later sessions on stereotypes, microaggressions, religion, culture and allyship.

Learning Intentions

Learners will:

- Understand how racism and discrimination relate specifically to skin colour
- Recognise how assumptions, reactions and exclusion affect belonging
- Explore the impact of both obvious and hidden racism in everyday school life
- Reflect on why respecting culture and identity is essential for inclusion

Starter

10 minutes

Noticing Difference and Belonging

Ask pupils to think quietly for a moment, then discuss in pairs:

- What differences exist within our class or school?
- Is noticing difference the same as judging someone?
- When might noticing difference turn into exclusion or unfair treatment?

Bring the group together.

Key Message

Difference is normal. Judgement and exclusion cause harm.

1. Why Do People Have Different Skin Colours?

10 minutes

Explain in clear, age-appropriate language:

Skin colour is linked to melanin, a natural substance in the skin. Melanin helps protect skin from the sun. Everyone has melanin – people just have different amounts.

Discussion prompts:

- Does skin colour tell us anything about someone's abilities, personality or behaviour?
- Why might people make assumptions based on skin colour?

Key Message

Skin colour is natural and meaningful, but it does not define a person's worth or ability.

2. Race, Culture and Identity

10 minutes

Explain briefly:

- Culture: the way people live, including traditions, language, food and customs
- Heritage: what is passed down through families and communities
- Tradition: practices or customs repeated over time

Discussion prompts:

- Why is it important that people can keep their culture or traditions?
- How might it feel if part of your identity was ignored, mocked or misunderstood?

Key Message

Respecting identity supports belonging and wellbeing.

3. Racism and Discrimination: Obvious and Hidden

15 minutes

Explain:

Racism happens when someone is treated unfairly or excluded because of their race, skin colour or culture. Racism and discrimination can be obvious or hidden.

Examples to explore verbally:

- Obvious racism: name-calling, insults, threats, physical harm
- Hidden racism: exclusion, jokes based on stereotypes, assumptions about background or ability, being ignored

Discussion prompts:

- Why might hidden racism be harder to notice or challenge?
- Why can it still be deeply hurtful or damaging?

Key Message

Racism is about impact, not intention.

4. Racism, Impact and School Life

10 minutes

Ask pupils to consider everyday school situations:

- Classrooms
- Corridors and social spaces
- Friendship groups
- Online spaces

Discussion questions:

- How might repeated experiences of racism or exclusion affect someone's confidence?
- How could it affect how safe someone feels being themselves at school?
- Can racism affect people even when it is not directed at them personally?

Key Message

Belonging affects learning, relationships and wellbeing.

Reflection

Awareness and Responsibility

Pupils reflect individually. Choose one:

- One thing I understand better about racism and skin colour is...
- One way schools can help everyone feel they belong is...

Teacher Guidance / Safeguarding Note

- Pupils should not be asked to share personal experiences
- Challenge stereotypes calmly and consistently
- Follow school safeguarding and child-protection procedures if concerns arise

Progression Note (for staff)

This lesson introduces racism as a form of discrimination linked to identity and prepares pupils for deeper exploration of stereotypes, microaggressions, religion, culture and allyship in subsequent sessions.

Participation should be adapted so that every learner can contribute in ways that work for them.

Lesson Plan 3

Celebrating Differences

Programme: Stronger Together
Duration: 50–60 minutes (flexible)
Setting: School / Youth / Community
Age Group: Upper Primary / Secondary (adaptable)

Purpose of the Session

This session helps children and young people explore identity and difference, understand why differences matter, recognise stereotypes and microaggressions, and reflect on how valuing differences strengthens belonging and school culture. The focus is on impact, respect and inclusion, rather than blame or labels.

Learning Intentions:

- Explore visible and invisible differences that make up identity
- Understand why difference matters in schools and communities
- Recognise stereotypes and microaggressions and their impact
- Reflect on how valuing difference strengthens belonging

Icebreaker

5-7 minutes

Set-up:

Give each pupil a Human Bingo grid (appendix).

Pupils move around the room to find someone who matches a square and writes their name in the box.

Discussion prompts:

"Did anything surprise you?"
"What did you notice about differences in the room?"

Key Message

Difference is everywhere – even in one classroom.

1. What Is Identity

5 minutes

Explain in clear, age-appropriate language:

Identity is made up of many parts. Some parts are easy to see, others are not. Everyone has multiple identities.

Reinforce:

- Not one thing defines a person
- People may share identities but still be very different

2. Activity: Identity Sort – Easy To See / Difficult To See

10 minutes

Working in small groups, pupils sort a set of cards into two categories:

- Easy to see
- Difficult to see

Explain that pupils are not expected to share personal information. The activity focuses on understanding difference in general, not individual experiences.

Example cards may include:

- **Easy to see:** hairstyle, clothing, skin colour, glasses, use of a wheelchair
- **Difficult to see:** religion, learning needs, mental health, family situation, language spoken at home, caring responsibilities

Discussion prompts:

- Can people be treated unfairly because of differences others cannot see?
- What risks are there in judging people based only on first impressions?
- How can we help others feel included when we don't know everything about them?

Key Message

You cannot understand a person fully by looking at them. Inclusion means treating others with respect and fairness, even when their differences are not visible.

Teacher Guidance:
Why This Activity Matters

This activity introduces pupils to the concept of visible and invisible differences, helping them challenge assumptions and stereotypes. It supports learning around empathy, fairness and inclusion. It helps create understanding of how bullying and discrimination can occur even when differences are hidden.

3. Why Do Differences Matter?

10 minutes

Place four large question prompts around the room:

- What would school be like if everyone was the same?
- How do differences help us learn and grow?
- Whose voice gets lost when differences aren't valued?
- How can differences make your school stronger?

Groups start at one question, discuss and write three points. Rotate once and add one more idea to another question.

Whole-Group Reflection:

Read out strong pupil responses.

Key Message

Difference strengthens learning, relationships and wellbeing.

4. What Is A Stereotype?

5 minutes

Explain briefly:

A stereotype is an oversimplified idea about a group. It ignores individuality. Even "positive" stereotypes can cause harm. Keep explanation short – pupils explore this through activity.

5. Activity: Stereotype Snap

10 minutes

Read statements aloud in a neutral tone:

- "Boys are better at football than girls"
- "Quiet people aren't confident"
- "Girls are more emotional than boys"
- "Asian people are all good at maths"
- "White people don't experience discrimination"
- "Muslims are all strict"
- "Jewish people are wealthy"
- "Christians are all conservative"
- "People with ADHD can't focus on anything"
- "Overweight people are lazy"
- "Americans are loud"

Pupils respond:

- 👍 **Stereotype**
- ✋ **Assumption**
- 👎 **Neither**

Discussion prompts:

- Why might this be unfair or inaccurate?
- Who could be affected by this thinking?

Key Message

Stereotypes stop us seeing people as individuals.

6. Microaggressions – Impact Focus

5 minutes

Microaggressions are small, often everyday comments or actions that can make someone feel excluded, stereotyped, or disrespected because of who they are. They may not be intended to cause harm, but they can still have a negative impact.

7. Activity: Microaggressions – Impact Only

10 minutes

Give each group one short fictional scenario (appendix).

Groups answer:

- What is being said or done?
- Why could this make someone feel uncomfortable or excluded?
- How might it affect someone if they hear this often?

Do not ask "what should you do" yet – focus only on impact.

Key Message

Impact matters more than intention.

Reflection

Choose one:

- One thing I understand better about difference now is...
- One way assumptions or stereotypes can affect people is...
- One reason it's important not to judge people by first impressions is...

Participation should be adapted so that every learner can contribute in ways that work for them.

Lesson Plan 4

Understanding Religion and Culture

Programme: Stronger Together
Duration: 50–60 minutes (flexible)
Setting: School / Youth / Community
Age Group: Upper Primary / Secondary (adaptable)

Purpose of the Session

This session supports children and young people to understand religion and culture, recognise similarities and differences, and explore why respect for beliefs and cultural practices is important for inclusion and belonging. The focus is on understanding and impact, not belief, judgement, or agreement.

Learning Intentions

Learners will:

- Understand what religion and culture are and how they differ
- Recognise that beliefs and cultural practices vary between individuals
- Reflect on how respect and curiosity support inclusion and belonging
- Consider how misunderstandings can affect people's experiences in school

Icebreaker: Same Or Different?

5 minutes

Set-up:

Read out pairs of words. Pupils respond:

👍 **Same**

✋ **Different**

👎 **Not sure**

Examples:

- Religion / Culture
- Belief / Opinion
- Tradition / Rule
- Celebration / Worship

Discussion prompts:

- Which were hardest to decide?
- Why might people confuse some of these?

Key Message

Understanding language helps reduce misunderstanding.

1. What Are Religion and Culture?

10 minutes

Explain in clear, age-appropriate language:

Religion often relates to beliefs, faith, worship and values. Culture includes traditions, customs, language, food, clothing and ways of life. People may belong to a religion, a culture, both, or neither. There is no single way to practise a religion or culture.

Reinforce:

- You cannot tell someone's beliefs or culture by looking at them.
- People from the same religion or culture can be very different.

Key Message

People are individuals, not labels.

2. Activity: Assumptions and Misunderstandings

10 minutes

Instructions

In small groups, pupils discuss short statements and decide:

What might someone assume here? Why could that be inaccurate or unfair?

Example prompts:

- "Someone wears religious clothing at school"
- "A pupil does not take part in a celebration"
- "A family follows different traditions at home"
- "Someone's beliefs are important to them, but private"

Discussion prompts:

- What assumptions might people make?
- How could these assumptions affect someone's sense of belonging?
- What could help avoid misunderstandings?

Key Message

Assumptions can cause harm even when they are not meant to.

3. Visible and Invisible Practices

10 minutes

Explain:

Some religious or cultural practices are visible, while others are private or invisible.

Group task

Sort examples into:

- Easy to see
- Difficult to see

Examples:

- Easy to see: religious clothing, festivals, food choices
- Difficult to see: beliefs, prayer, fasting, values, family traditions

Discussion prompts:

- Why might someone choose to keep some practices private?
- How can we show respect when we don't fully understand something?

Key Message

We don't know everything about a person by looking at them.

4. Respect in Everyday School Life

10 minutes

Whole-group or paired discussion:

- What does respect look like when beliefs or cultures are different?
- How can curiosity be respectful rather than intrusive?
- What should we do if someone's beliefs or culture are misunderstood or mocked?

Reinforce:

Respect does not mean agreement. It means fairness, kindness and inclusion.

Key Message

Respect is shown through everyday actions.

Reflection

5 minutes

Pupils choose one:

- One thing I understand better about religion or culture now is...
- One way misunderstandings about belief or culture can affect people is...
- One respectful action that helps people feel they belong is...

Teacher Guidance

This lesson focuses on understanding and respect, not personal belief or disclosure. Pupils should not be asked to share personal beliefs or practices.

Participation should be adapted so that every learner can contribute in ways that work for them.

Lesson Plan 5

Changing School Culture with Kindness

Programme: Stronger Together
Duration: 50–60 minutes (flexible)
Setting: School / Youth / Community
Age Group: Upper Primary / Secondary (adaptable)

Purpose of the Session

This session supports children and young people to understand how everyday actions shape school culture and how kindness, inclusion and allyship can help prevent bullying and exclusion. The focus is on practical behaviour change, shared responsibility and creating environments where everyone feels they belong.

Learning Intentions

Learners will:

- Understand what school culture is and how it is shaped
- Recognise how kindness and unkindness affect individuals and groups
- Explore the role of pupils as allies and upstanders
- Identify small, realistic actions that contribute to a kinder school culture

Icebreaker: Why Is This Hard?

5–7 minutes

Set Up

Display the statement:

"Most people know what the kind thing to do is, but don't always do it."

Ask pupils to think quietly for 30 seconds.

Then read the statements below.

Pupils respond by moving to one of three signs:

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Statements:

- It's easier to be kind when your friends are watching
- Staying silent can feel safer than speaking up
- Being kind sometimes costs you social status
- People worry about becoming the next target
- Online spaces make unkind behaviour easier

Discussion prompts:

- Which statements felt uncomfortable?
- Why might people stay silent even when they know better?
- What makes kindness harder in groups?

Key Message

Knowing what's right isn't the same as doing it – culture is about what feels safe to do.

1. What Is School Culture?

10 minutes

Explain in clear, age-appropriate language:

School culture is "how things feel" in a school. It is shaped by everyday behaviour, not just rules. Kindness and respect create safety and belonging. Unkind behaviour, silence or exclusion can allow bullying to continue.

Discussion prompts:

- What makes a school feel safe or unsafe?
- How do people know what behaviour is "normal"?

Key Message

Culture is created by what people say, do – and allow.

2. Activity: Ripple Effect

10 minutes

Instructions:

In small groups, give pupils scenario cards showing a small action.

Examples:

- Someone checks in on a pupil sitting alone
- A rumour is shared online
- A bystander speaks up
- A hurtful comment is ignored

Groups discuss:

- How might this affect the person involved?
- How could it affect others?
- What message does it send about what's acceptable?

Key Message

Kindness and unkindness spread.

3. From Bystander to Ally

10 minutes

Explain:

- A bystander notices what's happening
- An ally chooses to act safely and supportively
- Being an ally does not mean confrontation or danger

Explore safe ally actions:

- Staying with someone
- Getting adult help
- Challenging behaviour calmly
- Not sharing harmful content
- Offering support privately

Discussion prompts:

- What stops people from acting?
- What helps people feel confident to act?

Key Message

Doing nothing is still a choice.

4. Kindness In Action: Realistic Change

10 minutes

Whole-group or paired discussion:

- What small actions could make your school feel kinder?
- What behaviours should be encouraged more?
- How can kindness be shown consistently, not just occasionally?

Optional Activity

Create a Kindness Charter or Top 5 Actions for the class or year group.

Key Message

Culture changes through everyday behaviour.

Plenary: Reflection

5 minutes

Pupils choose one:

- One way kindness can change school culture is...
- One action I can take to help others feel included is...
- One behaviour that helps stop bullying before it starts is...

Responses may be written privately or anonymously.

Teacher Guidance

This lesson focuses on behaviour and culture, not personal disclosure. Pupils should not be asked to share personal experiences. If concerns about bullying or harm arise, follow safeguarding and child-protection procedures.

Key Closing Message

Kindness is not just about being nice. It is about creating a school culture where everyone feels safe, respected and able to thrive.

Participation should be adapted so that every learner can contribute in ways that work for them.

03

Inclusion Ambassador Programme

Purpose of the Pupil Ambassador Programme

The Stronger Together Inclusion Ambassador Programme supports children and young people to play an active role in shaping a positive, inclusive school culture. Ambassadors act as role models, allies and advocates for change, helping to promote kindness, respect and belonging across the school community.

The programme strengthens pupil voice and participation, supports early intervention, and reinforces consistent messages around inclusion, fairness and safety. It is rooted in strengths-based practice and recognises that leadership takes many forms, including listening, empathy and quiet confidence.

Why Inclusion Matters

The Ambassador Programme is inclusive by design. Ambassadors should reflect the diversity of the school community, including different backgrounds, abilities, personalities and lived experiences.

Ambassadors are not selected based on academic performance. Instead, schools are encouraged to identify pupils who demonstrate curiosity, fairness, reliability and a willingness to learn. A diverse group of ambassadors strengthens understanding of pupil experiences and contributes to a more inclusive culture.

Selecting Ambassadors

Schools may use pupil applications, peer nominations, staff nominations or a mixed approach. A blended model is often most effective, balancing accessibility, representation and fairness.

When selecting ambassadors, schools should consider gender balance, cultural diversity, inclusion of pupils with additional support needs, and representation across year groups.

Ambassador Roles and Responsibilities

Ambassadors play a visible and meaningful role within the school. Their responsibilities may include welcoming new pupils, promoting inclusive behaviour, supporting peers who feel left out, and using age-appropriate upstander language to challenge unkind behaviour safely.

Ambassadors are encouraged to help design and lead initiatives, ensuring that children and young people are active drivers of positive change, not just participants.

Ambassadors may also contribute to planning and delivering inclusion-focused activities, gathering pupil feedback, representing peer views, and supporting school-wide campaigns or assemblies. Ambassadors are not responsible for managing incidents or disclosures; their role is to notice, support and seek help from trusted adults when needed.

Training for Ambassadors

Ambassadors should receive training before taking on their role. This builds confidence, clarity and shared expectations.

Lesson Plan

Stronger Together Inclusion Ambassador Induction

Duration

60 minutes (can be delivered as two 30-minute sessions)

Aim

To prepare pupils to take on the role of Stronger Together Ambassadors by building understanding of inclusion, kindness and allyship, and by developing confidence to take safe, positive action.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the session, ambassadors will:

- Understand their role and responsibilities
- Recognise bullying, discrimination and unfair behaviour
- Know how to act safely as an upstander
- Understand when and how to seek adult support

Session Outline

1. Welcome and Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Group discussion: "What does kindness and inclusion look like in our school?"

Create shared expectations for respectful discussion.

2. Understanding Our Role (15 minutes)

Explore:

- What inclusion means
- What bullying, discrimination and racism can look like
- Why ambassadors matter in building positive culture
- Emphasise boundaries: ambassadors notice, support and report – they do not manage incidents

3. Kind Leadership and Communication (15 minutes)

Develop skills in:

- Listening and empathy
- Using calm, respectful language
- Challenging unkind behaviour safely
- Supporting peers without taking on adult responsibility

4. Scenario Practice (15 minutes)

Available in appendix

5. Reflection and Commitment (5 minutes)

Invite ambassadors to take a moment to reflect on what they have learned during the session and how it connects to their role within the school. Encourage pupils to think about one way they already show kindness or inclusion, and one small action they can take as a Stronger Together Ambassador to help others feel safe, respected or included.

This reflection can be shared verbally, written down, or completed quietly, depending on the age and needs of the group. The session should close by reinforcing that ambassadors are not expected to have all the answers, but to notice, care and seek help when needed. Introduce the Ambassador Pledge as a shared commitment to promoting kindness, respect and inclusion in everyday school life.

Ambassadors finish training by signing the **Ambassador Pledge** (template included in Appendix).

Meeting Structure

Ambassador groups should meet regularly, typically once a month, with a staff champion. Meetings should feel purposeful and empowering, providing space to share updates, raise issues, plan activities and celebrate successes.

Consistency is more important than frequency. Short, well-facilitated meetings help ambassadors feel valued and supported.

Examples of Ambassador Projects

Ambassadors may support or lead a range of age-appropriate activities that promote Stronger Together principles across the school and community. These activities should be shaped by pupil interests, school context and capacity, and should always be supported by a member of staff.

A wide range of practical ideas for ambassador-led classroom activities, whole-school projects and community engagement are provided in Section 4: Creative Ideas and Section 5: Community Engagement. Schools are encouraged to start small, focus on meaningful participation, and build activity over time.

Recognising Ambassadors

Recognition reinforces the value of inclusion and pupil leadership. Schools may choose to recognise ambassadors through certificates, badges, assemblies, newsletters or celebration events. Recognition should be meaningful and inclusive, rather than competitive.

Monitoring Impact

Schools are encouraged to monitor the impact of the Ambassador Programme through pupil voice, staff observation, feedback from ambassadors and tracking of inclusion-related outcomes. Ambassadors themselves should be involved in reflecting on what difference they see and feel.

Stronger Together recognises that participation looks different for every learner. Not all children and young people communicate in the same way, and some may express their views non-verbally, through assistive communication tools, through creative activities, or with support from trusted adults. The Ambassador Programme is therefore designed to be flexible and inclusive, using a range of participation approaches so that every learner can contribute, influence decisions and take on leadership roles in ways that work for them.

04

Creative Ideas

Creative activities help bring Stronger Together to life by strengthening relationships, celebrating diversity, and making kindness and inclusion visible across the school. These activities can be used in classrooms, assemblies, ambassador-led projects, family events or wider community spaces.

Schools are encouraged to adapt activities to suit their age group, context and capacity. Activities can be delivered as one-off sessions or revisited across the year to reinforce inclusive values.

Activity 1

Culture Tree

Purpose:
To celebrate and make visible the identities, cultures, languages and experiences within the school community.

Pupils contribute leaves to a shared tree display, representing aspects of their identity such as culture, language, traditions or meaningful experiences. The display grows over time and can be revisited to support discussion around belonging, respect and diversity.

Links to inclusion: identity, belonging, representation, challenging stereotypes.

Note: Pupils should only share what they feel comfortable with.

Activity 2

Kindness Pebbles

Purpose:
To show how small acts of kindness can create wider positive impact.

Pupils decorate pebbles with words or symbols of kindness and use them to recognise kind actions, create displays, or gift to others. Pebbles can be used within school grounds or shared with the wider community.

Links to inclusion: empathy, positive behaviour, allyship.

Activity 3

Stronger Together Mosaic

Purpose:
To create a collaborative artwork celebrating unity, identity and diversity.

Each pupil decorates a tile or square showing what inclusion or kindness means to them. When combined, the pieces form a shared mosaic displayed in a communal area.

Links to inclusion: self-worth, unity, collective identity.

Activity 4

Culture and Identity Map

Purpose:
To explore the range of cultures, languages and lived experiences within the school community.

Pupils contribute to a shared map by marking places connected to their family history, languages spoken or places that matter to them. This can be extended to families during events.

Links to inclusion: heritage, belonging, challenging assumptions about “who belongs.”

Activity 5

Kindness Compliment Cards

Purpose:
To build confidence, empathy and positive peer relationships.

Pupils write positive messages to peers, focusing on kindness, effort or inclusion. Cards can be shared privately or through a kindness mailbox system.

Links to inclusion: confidence, peer support, positive relationships.

Activity 6

Respect and Diversity Photo Gallery

Purpose:
To make diversity, respect and positive representation visible across the school.

Pupils capture images that reflect inclusion, kindness or belonging in their environment. Photos can be displayed physically or digitally with pupil-written captions.

Links to inclusion: representation, pupil voice, ownership of school culture.

Note: Follow your organisations guidance on photography and consent.

05

Community Engagement

Community is at the heart of inclusion. Children and young people feel safest, happiest, and most confident when they see respect, diversity and kindness reflected in the people and places around them.

Stronger Together recognises that schools cannot create inclusive cultures alone. Families, community groups, cultural organisations and local partners all play a vital role in modelling positive values, challenging discrimination and celebrating the differences that make us unique.

This section offers practical ways to strengthen relationships, build trust, and create shared experiences that reinforce inclusion across the wider community.

All activities should be voluntary, age-appropriate and delivered in ways that respect the values, needs and confidence levels of individual families.

Activity 1
Culture Celebration Day or Evening

Aim:

To celebrate diversity and build pride in identity.

What it looks like:

- Families contribute food, music, stories, songs, flags or artefacts
- Optional performances (dance, poetry, music)
- Pupils create displays about their cultures or identities
- Spaces for parents and carers to connect

Impact:

- Promotes representation
- Builds confidence
- Challenges stereotypes
- Strengthens home-school relationships

Activity 2
Community Storytelling Sessions

Aim:

To explore identity, belonging and heritage through stories.

Ideas:

- Invite parents, grandparents and community members to share traditional stories
- Include multilingual storytelling
- Pupils create their own stories celebrating diversity
- Link to literacy, RME and wellbeing

Impact:

- Builds empathy
- Strengthens intergenerational connection
- Celebrates language diversity

Activity 3
"Voices of Our Community" Display

Aim:
To make visible the rich mix of identities, languages and cultures in the school.

How it works:
- Pupils and families contribute photos, drawings or messages
- Create a corridor gallery or digital display
- Include quotes about kindness, belonging and respect

Impact:
- Improves representation
- Raises visibility of minority groups
- Promotes pride and belonging

Activity 4
Family Craft Workshops: "Stronger Together Creations"

Aim:
To bring families and children together around inclusion-focused art.

Options:
- Mosaic of unity
- Kindness stones
- Peace murals
- Identity posters

Impact:
- Builds relationships between families
- Offers low-pressure, positive interaction
- Supports emotional wellbeing

Activity 5
Inclusion and Anti-Racism Parent Workshops

Aim:
To build shared understanding of key concepts and language.

Content could include:
- What bullying, discrimination and racism look like
- Microaggressions
- Responding to harmful language
- How to support children to be upstanders
- How families can promote respect at home

Impact:
- Encourages consistency
- Reduces misunderstanding
- Gives parents confidence

06

Audit and Award Alignment

The Stronger Together Audit supports schools to reflect on current practice and identify next steps. Evidence gathered through the audit directly contributes to the Bronze, Silver and Gold Award Pathway.

Schools do not need to complete additional audits for the award.

The same evidence is used for both improvement planning and award recognition.

Lens 1: Leadership and School Culture

(Primary evidence for Bronze / Silver / Gold)

Statement	Yes	Partly	No	Evidence
Inclusion and respect are clearly reflected in school values and vision	☐	☐	☐	
Anti-bullying and anti-racism policies are current and shared with staff and families	☐	☐	☐	
Clear systems exist for reporting and responding to bullying and discrimination	☐	☐	☐	
Pupil voice informs decisions about wellbeing and inclusion	☐	☐	☐	
Families are informed about the school's Stronger Together approach	☐	☐	☐	
Inclusion priorities are included in school improvement planning	☐	☐	☐	

Award Link:

- **Bronze:** Policies in place, reporting systems clear
- **Silver:** Pupil voice informs decisions, priorities reviewed annually
- **Gold:** Inclusion embedded in vision, policies co-developed with pupils/families

Lens 2: Classroom Practice and Environment

(Primary evidence for Silver / Gold)

Statement	Yes	Partly	No	Evidence
I consistently model inclusive and respectful language	☐	☐	☐	
I challenge discriminatory or unkind behaviour promptly	☐	☐	☐	
Classroom displays and resources reflect diversity positively	☐	☐	☐	
Lessons include opportunities to explore kindness, fairness and identity	☐	☐	☐	
Pupils feel safe to express themselves and ask for help	☐	☐	☐	
Adjustments are made for pupils who may experience marginalisation	☐	☐	☐	

Award Link:

- **Silver:** Inclusive practice visible across classrooms
- **Gold:** Inclusion embedded across curriculum planning and learning environments

Lens 3: Confidence in Responding to Incidents

(Essential evidence for all award levels)

Statement	Yes	Partly	No	Evidence
I can recognise bullying, discriminatory or racist behaviour	☐	☐	☐	
I know how to record and report incidents correctly	☐	☐	☐	
I feel confident responding in a trauma-informed way	☐	☐	☐	
I can challenge behaviour while supporting reflection and learning	☐	☐	☐	
I know when and how to escalate concerns	☐	☐	☐	
I feel supported by leadership when responding to incidents	☐	☐	☐	

Award Link:

- **Bronze:** Staff understand procedures
- **Silver:** Staff respond confidently and consistently
- **Gold:** Staff model best practice and support others

Action Planning (Required for Award Progression)

Schools should identify **up to three priority areas** based on the audit.

Priority Area	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Evidence of Progress

Award Link:

- **Bronze:** 2–3 priorities identified
- **Silver:** Actions implemented and reviewed
- **Gold:** Sustained improvement demonstrated over time

Evidence of impact should include the perspectives of children and young people. This might include pupil surveys, focus groups, ambassador reflections, creative work, or examples of changes suggested and led by learners.

Evidence Examples (All Award Levels)

Schools may use:

- Policy extracts
- Audit summaries
- Pupil voice feedback
- Staff reflections
- Photographs of displays or activities
- Ambassador logs
- Evaluation data

Evidence should be **proportionate** and **manageable**.

07

Monitoring, Evaluation and Sustainability

Stronger Together is designed to support sustained culture change rather than one-off activity. Monitoring and evaluation help schools and communities understand what is working well, identify priorities for development and ensure that inclusive practice is embedded over time.

Evaluation should be proportionate, manageable and meaningful. It should support reflection and improvement, rather than create additional workload.

Monitoring Progress

Schools are encouraged to monitor progress using existing systems and evidence wherever possible. This may include reviewing incident records, staff reflection, pupil voice feedback, ambassador discussions and observations of school culture and relationships.

Monitoring should focus on changes in confidence, consistency of response and the extent to which kindness, respect and inclusion are visible in everyday practice.

Evaluation Tools

The Stronger Together Audit and Action Plan (Section 6) is the primary evaluation tool and can be used annually or at key review points. Schools may also draw on light-touch evaluation approaches such as pupil voice activities, staff feedback and ambassador reflection.

Optional evaluation templates for staff, pupils and Inclusion Ambassadors are provided in the Appendices. These tools are designed to be adaptable and supportive, and schools may choose to use them to help evidence impact, inform next steps and support reflection over time.

Measuring Impact

Impact may be demonstrated through a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators. This may include increased staff confidence in responding to bullying and discrimination, improved pupil confidence and sense of belonging, more consistent language and approaches across the school, and positive changes in relationships and behaviour.

Not all impact will be immediate or easily measured. Schools are encouraged to recognise gradual, relational change and to value pupil voice and lived experience alongside data.

Sustaining Stronger Together

To support sustainability, schools are encouraged to embed Stronger Together within improvement planning and everyday practice. This may include revisiting the audit and action plan annually, refreshing ambassador groups as pupils progress, maintaining opportunities for pupil voice and continuing to involve families and community partners where appropriate.

Sustained impact is achieved when inclusion becomes part of daily culture rather than a standalone programme.

Alignment with Education Scotland

Stronger Together supports schools to reflect on practice, plan for improvement and sustain positive change over time. The approach is grounded in self-evaluation, pupil participation and proportionate use of evidence, supporting schools to understand what is working well and where further development is needed.

Monitoring and evaluation activities within Stronger Together align with Education Scotland's expectations for continuous improvement and learner involvement, as set out in **How Good Is Our School?** Evidence gathered through the audit, pupil voice activities and staff reflection can support schools to demonstrate impact on wellbeing, inclusion and relationships, and to inform ongoing improvement planning.

Review and Next Steps

Evaluation findings should be used to celebrate strengths, identify priorities for further development and inform future planning. Schools may also use evaluation evidence to support progression through the **Stronger Together Award Pathway**.

Safe Strong & Free welcomes feedback from schools and communities to support the continued development of Stronger Together and ensure the resource remains responsive, relevant and effective.

08

Guidance for Teaching Staff

Every adult in school plays a vital role in shaping an inclusive, respectful and kind environment. Children notice how adults speak, how we treat one another, how we respond to conflict, and whether we model fairness and courage in everyday interactions.

This guidance supports staff to feel confident, consistent and empowered in promoting inclusion and challenging harmful behaviour.

Creating an Inclusive Classroom Environment

A truly inclusive classroom is one where every pupil feels:

- Safe
- Respected
- Able to express themselves
- Able to ask for help
- Valued for who they are

Practical Ways to Build an Inclusive Atmosphere

1. Use inclusive language

- Avoid assumptions about families, culture, gender or identity
- Use "people" instead of "boys and girls" where possible
- Use correct pronunciation of names; ask pupils to teach you if needed
- Challenge stereotypes gently and consistently

2. Represent diversity across the room

- Ensure displays, books, posters and teaching resources reflect a wide range of identities, cultures, skin tones, families and abilities
- Review materials yearly to avoid outdated or biased content

3. Normalise difference

Talk openly about diversity in an age-appropriate way:

- Family structures
- Culture, faith, languages
- Neurodiversity
- Disability
- Identity and expression
- Personality and learning styles

4. Create a "no embarrassment" culture

Make it safe for pupils to ask:

- "What does that word mean?"
- "Why shouldn't we say that?"
- "I don't understand – can you explain it?"

Mistakes become learning opportunities, not shame.

Responding to Bullying, Discrimination and Racism

Children rely on the adults around them to respond promptly, fairly and consistently.

Six-Step Response for Adults

1. Intervene quickly and calmly

Use a calm, steady tone.

2. Name the behaviour clearly

- "That was unkind"
- "That's discriminatory language"
- "What you said could hurt someone"

3. Support the affected pupil

- Check they feel safe
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Offer time to talk privately if needed

4. Follow school policy

Stronger Together supports Respect for All (2024):

Record → Report → Respond → Restore.

5. Use restorative dialogue (if appropriate)

Help pupils understand harm, take responsibility and rebuild relationships.

6. Communicate with home where required

What teachers should ALWAYS challenge

- Racist language (even said as a "joke")
- Biased comments or stereotypes
- Exclusion based on difference
- Repeated unkind behaviour
- Discriminatory remarks about disability, culture, religion, appearance or identity

What teachers should NEVER ignore

- Racist incidents – even subtle ones
- Microaggressions (e.g. comments about hair, skin tone, accents)
- "Banter" that targets difference
- Peer pressure that silences marginalised pupils

Understanding Microaggressions (Teacher Quick Guide)

Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional comments or behaviours that communicate bias or disrespect.

Examples:

- "Where are you really from?"
- "Your name is too hard to say"
- "You're good at this for a girl"
- Touching a pupil's hair without consent
- Assuming English isn't a pupil's first language

How to Respond:

- Acknowledge it: "That comment could make someone feel uncomfortable"
- Clarify: "What did you mean by that?"
- Reframe: "Let's try a kinder / more respectful way to say that"
- Educate gently: "Here's why that phrase might be hurtful..."

Inclusion grows through gentle, consistent correction and clear modelling.

Encouraging Upstander Behaviour

Pupils need adults to model and encourage safe ways to challenge harmful behaviour.

Teach pupils simple upstander strategies:

- Say something: "That's not kind" / "Please stop"
- Show support: Sit with or walk with the affected pupil
- Seek help: Tell an adult immediately
- Interrupt the moment: Change the subject or redirect
- Check in: "Are you okay?"

Facilitating Discussions on Identity, Racism and Diversity

Teachers may feel nervous about "saying the wrong thing." That's normal – and okay.

Top Tips for Safe, Respectful Dialogue

1. Set clear ground rules

- One voice at a time
- Respect all viewpoints
- No personal attacks
- Talk about behaviour or language, not people

2. Validate feelings but guide thinking

- "It's okay to feel unsure. Let's explore it together."

3. Keep the focus on learning

Not on debating identity or lived experience.

4. Avoid singling out children

Never expect a child to "represent" their culture or identity.

5. Clarify terms

Use simple, accurate definitions for:

- Prejudice
- Discrimination
- Racism
- Stereotypes
- Microaggressions
- Bullying

6. Use scenarios instead of personal disclosures

Safer, more neutral and reduces pressure.

Staff Scripts (Practical Language to Use)

For Challenging Behaviour

- "That language isn't respectful. Let's choose kinder words."
- "Stop – that could hurt someone."
- "I'm noticing unkind behaviour. Let's reset."

For Supporting Pupils

- "I hear you. Thank you for telling me."
- "You're safe to talk to me."
- "You didn't deserve that. Let's work it out together."

For Guiding Reflection

- "What happened there?"
- "How do you think they felt?"
- "What could you do differently next time?"

For Inclusion Moments

- "Everyone belongs here."
- "Our differences make our class stronger."
- "Thank you for sharing your perspective."

When to Seek Further Support

Teachers should seek leadership or specialist support when:

- Racism or discriminatory incidents are serious or repeated
- A child becomes fearful or withdrawn
- Patterns of targeted bullying emerge
- A family expresses concern about bias or exclusion
- An incident involves hate language or hate crime indicators

Early escalation protects children and ensures appropriate follow-up.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1 Why can rappers or public figures use certain racist words but not me?

Some communities may reclaim particular words within their own cultural or historical context. This does not make those words appropriate in wider use.

In educational settings, our responsibility is to maintain a culture where language is consistently respectful, safe and non-harmful. Words associated with racism carry a history that can cause real hurt, regardless of intention.

Q2 Can a child's comment be racist even if they did not intend harm?

Yes. Harmful impact can occur without harmful intent.

If a comment relates to race, culture, identity or appearance and causes upset, it must be addressed.

The focus is on learning, empathy and reflection, not blame.

A useful prompt is:
"How might that have felt for the other person?"

Q3 Can racism occur between pupils of the same race or ethnic background?

Yes. Racism can take place within groups as well as between them.

If language or behaviour reinforces stereotypes or demeans someone based on identity, it is still discriminatory and requires a consistent response.

Q4 What if a pupil says, "It was only a joke"?

Humour linked to stereotypes, identity or appearance can still be discriminatory and harmful.

A professional response might be:
"Even if it was meant as a joke, it can still hurt someone. Let's think about a more respectful way to express that."

This maintains boundaries while encouraging reflection.

Q5 How can racism be explained to younger children appropriately?

Keep explanations simple, reassuring and focused on fairness:
"Racism is when someone is treated unfairly because of their skin colour or culture. It's never okay."

Use stories, puppets, role-play or visual examples. Avoid abstract language or detailed historical contexts at early ages.

Q6 Is it racist to describe someone as Black, Brown or White?

Not inherently. Respectful, accurate description is appropriate when used sensitively.

The key factors are: intention, tone and context.

Language becomes harmful when used to exclude, stereotype or mock. Where possible, model respectful, identity-affirming language.

Q7 How should we respond if parents express disagreement with anti-racism education?

Reassure parents that anti-racism education is part of the school's responsibility to ensure safety, equality and children's rights.

It aligns with statutory duties under: Respect for All, Equality Act 2010, GIRFEC and UNCRC incorporation.

Emphasise that teaching is age-appropriate, reassuring in tone, and focused on kindness, respect and fairness for all children.

Q8 What should I say if pupils ask why racism still happens?

Acknowledge honestly and calmly:
"Some unfair ideas still exist, but we work together to make things fairer."

Then reinforce agency:
"Each of us can make a positive difference through kindness, respect and speaking up safely."

Q9 What if a pupil explains their language or behaviour by saying, "That's what my parents say"?

Acknowledge without judgement:
"Families can have different views or use different words."

Then restate the school expectation clearly:
"In our school, we use respectful language towards everyone."

Encourage reflection:
"How might that word make someone feel?"

This protects the child, their family and the school culture.

Q10 Pupils sometimes say they "don't see colour". Is this positive?

Children often intend to express fairness, but the phrase can unintentionally overlook individual identity and lived experiences.

A more supportive message is:
"We do see and value differences, and we treat everyone with fairness and respect."

This promotes both equality and meaningful recognition of diversity.

10

Key Definitions

To work effectively on bullying, racism, and inclusion, it is important that children, young people, and adults share a common understanding of the key terms used in this toolkit.

Language and Identity: Black, Brown, or People of Colour

There is no single correct term to describe race or ethnicity that will suit everyone. Some individuals may prefer to identify as Black, some as Brown, some as People of Colour, and others may not use these terms at all.

Respecting personal identity means recognising that individuals define their own identity. It is therefore best practice not to assume which term to use. Where relevant, organisations and individuals should:

- Seek preference respectfully – for example: "How do you prefer to be described?"
- Use the language chosen by the person themselves.
- Acknowledge diversity of preferences – terms may differ across and within communities.
- Using the words that individuals choose to describe themselves reflects respect, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity.

Bullying

Bullying is face-to-face and/or online behaviour which impacts on a person's sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life, and their ability to respond effectively to the situation they are in.

The behaviour does not need to be repeated or intended to cause harm, for it to have an impact. Bullying behaviour can be physical, emotional or verbal and can cause people to feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out.

Racism

Racism is unfair or harmful treatment based on race, ethnicity, culture or skin colour. It includes prejudiced language, exclusion, stereotypes and discriminatory behaviour.

Stereotypes

A stereotype is a fixed and oversimplified idea about a person or group, which assumes everyone is the same, even though people are actually very different.

Discrimination

Discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic (Equality Act 2010), such as race, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

Inclusion

Inclusion means creating environments where every child feels safe, valued and respected, and differences are recognised and celebrated.

Allyship

Allyship means taking safe, positive action to support someone who is being excluded, bullied or discriminated against

Bystander

A bystander is someone who sees or knows about bullying or discrimination but is not directly involved. Being a passive bystander allows harm to continue. Being an upstander means safely intervening or seeking help. A bystander sees or knows about harmful behaviour but is not directly involved. An upstander takes safe action or seeks help.

11

Stronger Together Award Pathway

The Stronger Together Award recognises schools and youth settings that demonstrate commitment, progress and excellence in promoting kindness, respect, inclusion and diversity.

The award encourages whole-school culture change and provides a meaningful structure for celebrating progress in:

- Preventing bullying
- Addressing discrimination and racism
- Strengthening pupil voice and leadership
- Celebrating differences
- Building community partnerships
- Embedding inclusion across daily practice

Schools can achieve Bronze, Silver or Gold by completing a set of clear criteria.

Purpose of the Award

The Stronger Together Award helps schools to:

- Recognise and celebrate progress
- Strengthen inclusive culture and values
- Engage staff, pupils and families
- Demonstrate improvement for inspections and SIPs
- Embed anti-bullying and anti-racism policy into practice
- Develop a long-term approach to inclusion

The programme is flexible and accessible for all school types.

How the Award Works

Schools progress through three levels:

Bronze

Building the Foundations

Establishing the core structures of inclusion and anti-bullying practice.

Silver

Embedding and Expanding

Deepening impact through pupil leadership, curriculum work and staff confidence.

Gold

Sustaining and Leading

Modelling excellence as a whole-school community and inspiring others.

Schools may begin at any stage and move at their own pace.

Criteria for Each Award Level

Below are the final, streamlined, professional criteria.

Bronze Award

Building Foundations

Bronze recognises schools that have established the basic structures for inclusion, anti-bullying and anti-racism.

A. Leadership and Policy

- Anti-bullying and anti-racism policies are up to date and shared with staff and families
- Staff understand reporting and response procedures
- Leadership has completed the Stronger Together Leadership and Culture Audit

B. Staff Practice

- Staff model inclusive language and challenge unkind behaviour consistently
- At least one staff member has completed Stronger Together training

C. Curriculum and Learning

- At least one Stronger Together lesson has been delivered in each class or year group
- Diversity is represented in learning materials and displays

D. Pupil Experience

- Pupils understand the concepts of kindness, respect and upstanding
- A simple, pupil-friendly reporting system is in place

E. Community Engagement

- Families have been informed about the Stronger Together approach

F. Evaluation

- Pupils complete at least one Stronger Together survey
- School identifies 2–3 improvement priorities

Evidence Examples:

- Lesson plans
- Staff meeting notes
- Updated policy extracts
- Pupil survey summaries
- Display photographs

Silver Award

Embedding and Expanding

Silver recognises schools that have embedded inclusion and anti-discrimination approaches into daily practice.

A. Leadership and Policy

- Leaders use data to monitor bullying, discriminatory and racist incidents
- Annual inclusion and anti-racism improvement priorities are identified and recorded

B. Staff Practice

- Most staff have participated in Stronger Together CPD
- Staff confidently challenge discrimination, stereotypes and microaggressions
- Inclusive representation is visible across the curriculum

C. Curriculum and Learning

- Stronger Together lessons delivered termly or as part of a planned programme
- Discussions about identity, diversity and respect are embedded across subjects

D. Pupil Experience

- Inclusion Ambassador Programme is active, with at least one completed project
- Pupils report feeling listened to and represented
- Upstander behaviour is visible in break times, transitions and classrooms

E. Community Engagement

- At least one community or family inclusion event is delivered annually
- Partnerships with cultural or community groups have begun

F. Evaluation

- Mid-year and end-of-year evaluations completed
- The school shows measurable improvement in at least two key areas

Evidence Examples:

- Ambassador project reports
- CPD records
- Community event photos
- Curriculum samples
- Updated displays
- Incident trend data

Gold Award

Sustaining Excellence

Gold recognises schools that demonstrate outstanding, sustained practice in inclusion, anti-bullying and anti-racism – and that share their learning with others.

A. Leadership and Policy

- Inclusion and anti-racism are central to school vision, values and SIP
- Leaders champion inclusive culture at local or national levels
- Policies are co-developed with pupils and families

B. Staff Practice

- All staff consistently model inclusive behaviour and language
- Staff confidently deliver discussion-based learning on identity, racism and discrimination
- Collegiate learning communities (CLPL groups) support ongoing development

C. Curriculum and Learning

- Diversity and anti-racism are embedded across curriculum planning
- Pupils investigate real-world issues and lead informed discussions
- Representation is monitored and improved annually

D. Pupil Experience and Leadership

- Inclusion Ambassadors lead campaigns and mentor younger pupils
- Pupils co-design school improvements related to inclusion
- Pupils report high levels of safety, belonging and respect

E. Community Engagement

- Strong, active partnerships with cultural organisations and community groups
- Annual community inclusion events are embedded in the school calendar
- Families from minority ethnic backgrounds feel strongly connected to the school

F. Evaluation and Impact

- Significant, sustained improvements in:
  - Belonging
  - Reporting confidence
  - Staff confidence
  - Diversity representation
  - Reduction in bullying and racist incidents
- School shares practice with others (e.g. cluster events)

Evidence Examples:

- SIP extracts
- Pupil leadership portfolios
- Community partnerships
- Staff CLPL logs
- Longitudinal data
- Practice-sharing presentations

How Schools Apply for an Award

Step 1
Choose Award Level

Bronze, Silver or Gold based on current practice.

Step 2
Gather Evidence

Schools complete:

- Audits
- Surveys
- Brief written reflections
- Ambassador logs
- Data summaries

Step 3
Submit Application

Applications include:

- Evidence checklist
- Narrative summary (1–2 pages)
- Optional photos or examples

Step 4
Review and Feedback

The Stronger Together team provides:

- Recognition
- Strengths-based feedback
- Suggestions for next steps

Step 5
Celebrate Success

Schools receive:

- Certificates
- Digital badge for website
- Optional press/social media asset
- Invitation to share practice (Silver–Gold)

Award Timelines

Schools may:

- Apply anytime
- Complete one award per year
- Progress at their own pace
- Maintain awards through annual reflection

Gold is maintained through ongoing evidence of sustained practice.

Support Available

The Stronger Together team can offer:

- Training for staff
- Assembly support
- Ambassador training
- Advice on community events
- Guidance on responding to racist and discriminatory incidents
- Data and evaluation tools
- Help preparing award applications

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Appendices

Stronger Together

Staff Evaluation Template

School / Setting:	
Role:	(e.g. class teacher, support staff, leader)
Session(s) delivered:	
Date:	

1. Confidence and Understanding

Please indicate how confident you feel after delivering Stronger Together.

Statement	Not Really	A bit	Yes
I understand what bullying is	☐	☐	☐
I understand why racism and discrimination are harmful	☐	☐	☐
I know what kindness and inclusion mean	☐	☐	☐
I know what to do if someone is treated unfairly	☐	☐	☐
I know who I can talk to if I need help	☐	☐	☐

2. Impact on Pupils

Based on your observations, to what extent do you agree?

Statement	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
Pupils understood key messages about kindness and inclusion	☐	☐	☐
Pupils engaged positively with discussion and activities	☐	☐	☐
Pupils showed increased awareness of impact vs intent	☐	☐	☐
Pupils understood safe ways to seek help or be an upstander	☐	☐	☐
I know who I can talk to if I need help	☐	☐	☐

4. Any Challenges or Barriers?

(e.g. time, confidence, age-appropriateness)

5. Next Steps

Tick any that apply:

Statement	
☐	Repeat or embed lessons
☐	Link learning to assemblies or wider curriculum
☐	Involve Inclusion Ambassadors
☐	Share learning with staff
☐	Review school practice or displays

6. Overall Impact

How would you describe the impact of Stronger Together so far?

Statement	
☐	Limited
☐	Emerging
☐	Positive
☐	Significant

Additional comment:

(optional)

This evaluation supports reflection, improvement planning and evidence for the Stronger Together Award.

Stronger Together

Pupil Evaluation

Class / Group:	
Age / Year Group:	
Date:	

1. Learning and Understanding

Tick the answer that fits best.

Statement	Not Really	A bit	Yes
I understand what bullying is	☐	☐	☐
I understand why racism and discrimination are harmful	☐	☐	☐
I know what kindness and inclusion mean	☐	☐	☐
I know what to do if someone is treated unfairly	☐	☐	☐
I know who I can talk to if I need help	☐	☐	☐

2. How the Lessons Felt

Choose one answer for each.

Statement	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
I felt safe sharing ideas	☐	☐	☐
I felt listened to	☐	☐	☐
The activities helped me think differently	☐	☐	☐

3. Reflection

Choose one sentence to complete:

One thing I learned was:

One way to be kinder or more inclusive is:

One thing schools can do to help people feel they belong is:

4. Confidence Scale

Circle one number:

1	2	3	4	5
Not confident				Very confident

How confident do you feel about standing up for kindness or getting help?

You do not need to share personal experiences. This is about learning and ideas.

Stronger Together

Inclusion Ambassador Scenarios

These scenarios are designed for discussion and role-play during Ambassador training.
Ambassadors are not expected to solve problems. Their role is to notice, support and involve a trusted adult.

Scenario 1 Breaktime Exclusion

At breaktime, you notice the same pupil is often standing alone. When they try to join a game, others say, "There's no space," even though there clearly is. The pupil walks away looking upset.

Discussion prompts:

- What have you noticed?
- How might the pupil be feeling?
- What safe actions could an Ambassador take?
- When should an adult be involved?

Scenario 2 Hurtful "Joke"

You overhear someone say to another pupil, "Relax, it was only a joke," after making a comment about their accent. The pupil laughs awkwardly but looks uncomfortable.

Discussion prompts:

- Why might this still be hurtful?
- What does impact matter more than intention mean here?
- What is a safe way to support the pupil?
- Who should you report this to?

Scenario 3 Online Group Chat

A class group chat shares a meme that makes fun of a pupil's appearance. Several people react with laughing emojis. No one challenges it.

Discussion prompts:

- Why can online behaviour feel harder to challenge?
- What could an Ambassador do safely?
- Why is saving evidence important?
- When should this be passed to an adult?

Scenario 4 Name-Calling

You hear a pupil repeatedly calling another pupil's name "weird" and refusing to say it properly, even after being asked to stop.

Discussion prompts:

- Why is using someone's name respectfully important?
- How might repeated behaviour affect someone over time?
- What should an Ambassador do next?
- What should they not try to handle alone?

Scenario 5 Whispering and Staring

During lunch, a group keeps staring and whispering about a pupil's clothing linked to their culture or religion. The pupil notices and looks uncomfortable.

Discussion prompts:

- What signs show someone may feel unsafe or excluded?
- How can an Ambassador show support without drawing attention?
- When is it important to seek adult support?

Scenario 6 Being Asked to "Fix It"

A pupil comes to you and says,
"You're an Ambassador – can you sort this out?"
They start to explain a situation that sounds serious.

Discussion prompts:

- What is your responsibility here?
- Why is it important not to promise confidentiality?
- What is the safest next step?

Key Ambassador Message

Notice. Care. Get help. Ambassadors support kindness and inclusion, but adults are responsible for managing incidents.

Stronger Together

Ambassador Pledge

We commit to creating a school community where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued.

We will:

- Challenge bullying, racism, and discrimination in all forms
- Treat others with kindness, fairness, and respect
- Celebrate differences and learn from one another
- Speak up when something feels wrong and support those who need help
- Take responsibility for our words, actions, and impact

We understand that inclusion is not just about good intentions, but about everyday behaviour.

Scenario Cards

Bullying, Discrimination and Microaggressions

All scenarios are fictional. They are designed to support discussion about impact, inclusion and kindness.

Pupils should not be asked to share personal experiences.

Section A

Bullying and Unkind Behaviour

Scenario A1 – Repeated Name-Calling
Every morning when Jack comes into class, someone shouts "loser" at him and the rest of the group laughs.

Scenario A2 – Exclusion at Breaktime
At breaktime, Kwame tries to join a game but the group tells him there is "no space", even though there clearly is.

Scenario A3 – Online Mockery
In a class group chat, a meme is shared making fun of a pupil's appearance. Several pupils react with laughing emojis, but no one says anything.

Scenario A4 – Physical Intimidation
On the way home from school, Aisha is pushed into a fence by two older pupils who tell her to "stay out of their way".

Section B

Racist or Discriminatory Behaviour

Scenario B1 – Accent Mocking
Kelani is teased about her accent. Some pupils copy the way she speaks to make others laugh.

Scenario B2 – Stereotype About Ability
In class, a pupil says to Amina,
"You must be really good at maths because you're Asian."

Scenario B3 – Cultural Food Shaming
When Sarah brings traditional food from home for lunch, some pupils say it "smells disgusting" and refuse to sit near her.

Scenario B4 – Name Mocking
During lunch, a group of pupils mock Raj's surname and say it sounds "funny".

Section C

Microaggressions (Everyday, Subtle Harm)

Scenario C1 – "Where Are You Really From?"
A pupil asks Maya, "Where are you really from?"
When she answers, "Here," they reply, "No, where are you actually from?"

Scenario C2 – Name Dismissal
A pupil says to Amir, "Your name is too hard to say.
Can we just call you something else?" Others laugh.

Scenario C3 – Backhanded Comment
A pupil says, "You're really confident for someone like you," then adds, "I didn't mean anything by it."

Scenario C4 – Gendered Assumption
During PE, a pupil says, "You're really fast for a girl."

Scenario C5 – Unwanted Attention
Someone touches a pupil's hair and says, "It's so interesting," without asking first.

Scenario C6 – Colour-Blind Statement
During a discussion about racism, a pupil says, "I don't see colour. Everyone's the same to me."

Discussion Prompts

(use selectively)

- What is happening in this situation?
- How might this make someone feel?
- Why might the impact be harmful, even if it wasn't intended?
- What would be a safe next step?

Key Message

If behaviour causes harm or exclusion, it should be noticed, challenged and supported – regardless of labels.

Human Bingo

Find someone in your class who can answer yes to each of the statements below. Remember you can't have the same person twice!

The first person to complete their bingo card must shout **BINGO!**

Speaks more than one language	**Likes a different food than you**	**Has a family tradition you didn't know about**
Can teach you a word in another language	**Has a hobby you've never tried**	**Has a different favourite celebration**
Has lived in or has family in a different country	**Likes a different style of music to you**	**Has a talent you didn't know about**

Policy Links and Guidance

The Stronger Together Toolkit is designed to align with and support existing national and international policies on children's rights, equality, and wellbeing. Below are key documents and frameworks that schools, youth groups, and community organisations may find useful.

Respect for All (Scotland's Anti-Bullying Strategy)
National guidance for preventing and responding to bullying.

GIRFEC
Scotland's framework for children's wellbeing.

Equality Act 2010
UK legislation protecting individuals from discrimination.

UNCRC
International children's rights framework.

Useful national and international guidance on safeguarding, equality and preventing school-based harm.

NSPCC

KCSIE

UNESCO

Further Resources and Reading

This appendix provides a selection of recommended books, films, classroom materials, and organisations that can support schools, youth groups, and communities in promoting kindness, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Children's Books (Primary)

- Have You Filled a Bucket Today? by Carol McCloud
- The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson
- All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold
- Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o

Young People's Books (Secondary)

- Wonder by R.J. Palacio
- The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas
- Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- Run, Rebel by Manjeet Mann

Films and Media

- Inside Out (Disney/Pixar, PG)
- Zootropolis (Disney, PG)
- Hidden Figures (PG)
- Wonder (PG)

Safe Strong & Free
Fairways House, Fairways Business Park,
Inverness, United Kingdom

info@safestrongandfree.org.uk

safestrongandfree.org.uk

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