

Scenarios

1. Gendered Assumptions in the Staffroom

Sarah was asked to organise the school fair during a staff meeting. One colleague remarked, “Women are always so good at planning these things.” The others nodded, and Sarah found herself responsible for logistics while her male colleagues took on technical and leadership roles. Throughout the process, her organisational skills were praised as “natural”, while the men were commended for their problem-solving. After the event, Sarah reflected on how her role had been shaped by assumptions about gender, and how these expectations influenced the way her contributions were valued.

What might the victim do? What might the bystander do? Why might the perpetrator have done what they did?

2. Assumptions About Religion

During a classroom discussion about upcoming holidays, Ms Taylor casually said to a pupil, "You'll be excited for Christmas, won't you?" The child looked uncomfortable and quietly replied, "We don't celebrate Christmas." Some classmates overheard and started asking, "Why not? Aren't you Christian?" A few pupils laughed and made comments like, "Everyone celebrates Christmas!" Ms Taylor noticed the child becoming withdrawn but moved on with the lesson without addressing the situation. Later, the child sat silently during a festive craft activity, while others chatted happily about their holiday plans.

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3. Ignored Ideas in Meetings

At the weekly staff meeting, Mr Khan suggested introducing a behaviour chart to help with classroom management. Several colleagues talked over him, and his idea was ignored. The meeting continued as if he hadn't spoken. Later, another teacher presented a similar idea, which was welcomed and discussed enthusiastically. Mr Khan noticed this pattern repeated in future meetings, with his suggestions often overlooked or attributed to others. Over time, he felt increasingly marginalised, his confidence and engagement in collaborative work diminished.

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4. Homophobic Insult

Miss Taylor observed a lunchtime football game with pupils. During the match, one boy shouted at another, calling them “gay” in a mocking tone after they fouled another player. The comment was clearly intended as an insult, and some pupils laughed. The targeted pupil looked embarrassed and withdrew from the game. Other staff on duty overheard but did not intervene. Miss Taylor finished the game and returned to the staffroom, where the incident was not discussed.

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5. Religious Exclusion

Fatima, who wears a hijab, was approached by a colleague during planning for swimming lessons. “You probably won’t want to join the swimming lesson because of your religion,” the colleague said, in front of other staff. No one responded, and Fatima was not included in the planning for swimming lessons that term. She noticed her input was often overlooked in activities involving physical education or school trips. The comment about her religion was repeated by other staff in future discussions, affecting her sense of belonging in the school community.

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6. Power Imbalance and Racism

As a newly qualified teacher, Tom was in the staffroom when a senior colleague made a racist comment about a pupil's family background. The remark was made loudly, and several other staff members heard it. No one challenged the comment, and the conversation quickly moved on. Tom noticed similar remarks were made regularly by senior staff, often going unaddressed. He felt uncomfortable about the culture in the staffroom and the lack of accountability for discriminatory language, questioning the school's commitment to equality.

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7. Stereotypes in Subject Choices

Mr Evans overheard a colleague advising a girl to choose “cooking or textiles” instead of “graphics or science”, saying “girls are better at those subjects”. The girl looked disappointed, and the conversation was overheard by other pupils, who nodded in agreement. Mr Evans noticed girls in the class were often encouraged towards traditional “female” subjects, while boys were steered towards science and technology. The pattern was repeated during options evening, with staff making similar suggestions to parents, influencing pupils’ choices.

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8. Disrespect from Parents

Mrs Patel was approached by a parent at the classroom door, who loudly complained, “You don’t belong in this area because of your skin colour.” Other parents and children were present, and Mrs Patel was left standing in silence as the parent walked away. The incident was witnessed by several staff members, but no one intervened or offered support. Mrs Patel felt exposed and humiliated, and the comment was repeated by the parent in later conversations with other families, leaving her isolated within the school community.

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9. Sexist Comments About Pregnancy

During lunch in the staffroom, colleagues repeatedly asked Miss Green, “When are you having a baby?” and told her, “It’s easy for women to have a child when they want.” The topic was brought up regularly, regardless of her own wishes or circumstances. Miss Green noticed similar comments were made to other female staff, often in front of students. The persistent questioning and assumptions about pregnancy affected her sense of privacy and professionalism at work.

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10. Exclusion by Peers (“Whitewashed” / “Coconut”)

Raj, a teacher of Asian heritage, was called “whitewashed” or “coconut” by colleagues, who never invited him to group outings or social events. The exclusion was ongoing, and other staff seemed to accept it as normal. Raj was left out of informal conversations and team-building activities, and his contributions were often overlooked in collaborative projects. The label and exclusion affected his relationships with colleagues and his sense of belonging within the school.

The term “whitewashed” or “coconut” is often used as a derogatory insult to suggest that a person of colour is betraying or rejecting their cultural identity by adopting behaviours, values, or attitudes perceived as belonging to white people.

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