

Talking To Children About Sensitive News: UK Riots

The news is easily accessed in today's world and many of the children we teach will already have some awareness of the riots in the UK over the summer break. This guide has been put together to help you consider why and how you might discuss these events.

Why discuss the riots?

- To provide an opportunity for children to share any worries or concerns and ask questions in a safe environment.
- To tackle any misconceptions.
- To help children develop empathy, tolerance and compassion.

How?

- **When will you have your discussion?**
Mornings work well as some children prefer more time to process and reflect so they have the rest of the school day to ask further questions.
- **Where will you have your discussion?**
Select the place where children are most comfortable and likely to open up. Class discussions are often effective with an adult the children know well, as it helps them feel safe and secure.
- **What will you discuss?**
It is important that the content is age-appropriate and consistent across school. Discuss what will be delivered to children aged 10-11 compared with children aged 4-5. You may feel the riots only need to be discussed with older children in your school.

Example:

With older children, you could explain the riots have been organised by people who have extreme views about things linked to immigration, nationality and race. You could discuss what has happened and what racism is.

With younger children, you could explain some people in the UK have caused damage but so many more people have helped fix the damage and shown kindness.

Top tips

- Set out rules/expectations for the discussions such as everyone can share their voices, everyone should feel listened to, everyone should be respected, even if we do not always agree, consider the feelings of others throughout the discussion etc.
- Be honest. Lies can lead to mistrust and confusion and the truth usually comes out in the end. If you feel unsure about answering a question or that it may not be appropriate, tell the children that. It is okay to say you are not sure.
- Don't talk too much. Children need time to process information and ask questions.
- Think carefully about the language you use and try to stick to the facts. Make it clear if parts of the discussion are your own thoughts.
- Make sure that the content is age-appropriate including any images and videos.
- Focus on the positives. There are many examples of people and communities coming together to help fix the destruction left following the riots and showing one another kindness. People have used their voices to protest peacefully against racism.
- Provide the opportunity for children to reflect on and express their emotions in a wide variety of ways. This could include the use of visual aids, discussions, post-its, emotion cards, smiley faces etc, alongside talk-based approaches.



People in Middlesbrough coming together to clean up after the riots.

Source: @mrs_kv's X page.

Considerations

- The family backgrounds of your children. Is it possible you have some families who have been involved in the riots or directly affected by them?
- Communicate and work together with your families. Let them know what you are sharing – how and why.