



# Confirmation Bias

MORE THAN **FLAGS**  
**AND RAINBOWS**  
Training



## What is Confirmation Bias?

Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favour, and recall information in a way that confirms one's preexisting beliefs or expectations. This bias can significantly impact decision-making in education, leading to overconfidence in assumptions and the potential dismissal of critical evidence.

## How Does Confirmation Bias Manifest in Education?

**Student Assessments:** Teachers may interpret a student's work in a way that aligns with their existing perception of that student, rather than evaluating it objectively.

**Classroom Behaviour Management:** A teacher who believes a student is disruptive may be more likely to notice and react to negative behaviour while overlooking positive contributions.

**Curriculum Development:** Schools may favour traditional teaching methods and resources while dismissing new evidence-based approaches that challenge long-standing practices.

**School Policies:** Leadership teams may resist change by dismissing new research or practices that contradict established approaches.

## Recognising Confirmation Bias in Education

**Selective Attention:** Focusing on evidence that supports an existing belief while ignoring contradictory information.

**Misinterpretation of Data:** Analysing student performance or behaviour in a way that reinforces pre-existing views.

**Resistance to Change:** Dismissing new educational approaches or policies because they challenge long-held assumptions.

**Echo Chambers:** Only engaging with research, colleagues, or professional networks that reinforce current beliefs.

## Strategies to Combat Confirmation Bias

**Seek Diverse Perspectives:** Encourage input from different staff, students, and educational experts to challenge assumptions.

**Personal Reflection:** Reflect on own biases to recognise when confirmation bias may influence our own decisions

**Use Structured Decision-Making Processes:** Base teaching and policy decisions on objective criteria and research rather than instinct.

**Encourage Critical Thinking:** Foster a school culture where questioning, evidence-based discussion, and open-mindedness are valued.

**Implement Blind Processes:** For example, anonymised marking to ensure assessments are fair and not influenced by prior perceptions of a student.

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## Reflective Questions

To better understand how confirmation bias may appear in your school, consider the following questions:

### **Recruitment & Staff Development:**

How do you approach candidate selection, and what influences your decisions? In what ways do you ensure all applicants and staff are evaluated fairly and objectively?

### **Curriculum & Teaching:**

How do you decide which resources and perspectives to prioritise in your teaching? What steps do you take to incorporate diverse viewpoints and experiences in your curriculum?

### **Student Assessment & Behaviour Management:**

How do you ensure your assessments fairly reflect the abilities of all students? What strategies help you recognise and mitigate potential biases in grading, discipline, or pastoral care?

### **Parental & Community Engagement:**

How do you balance and respond to different perspectives within your school community?

What steps do you take to ensure all voices, including those from underrepresented groups, are heard and valued?

### **School Policies & Strategic Planning:**

How regularly do you reflect on and challenge the assumptions behind school policies?

What processes help your school adapt to new research, student needs, or societal changes?

