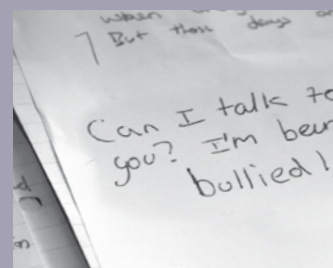# Homophobic bullying

Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools

**department for
children, schools and families**

Contents

HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING:
Guidance

Executive summary

1. Every child in every school has the right to learn free from the fear of bullying, whatever form that bullying may take. Everyone involved in a child's education needs to work together to ensure that this is the case.

2. Schools need to take an active approach to tackling all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying. Schools should be taking action to prevent bullying behaviour, as well as responding to incidents when they occur. A preventative approach to bullying means that schools safeguard the welfare of their pupils. It also means that schools are playing their part to create a society in which people treat each other with respect. Schools know how to prevent and respond to bullying, and will already have strategies in place. Preventing and responding to homophobic bullying should be part of these existing strategies. This guidance helps with the specifics around homophobic bullying. For more information on overall anti-bullying work, refer to Safe to Learn.

What is homophobic bullying?

3. Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

4. Who experiences homophobic bullying?

• Young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB).

• Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

• Young people who are different in some way – they may not act like the other boys or girls.

• Young people who have gay friends, or family, or their parents/carers are gay.

• Teachers, who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

5.   Who does the bullying and why?

•   Anyone. Especially if they have not been told it's wrong.

•   They think that lesbian and gay people should be bullied, because they believe gay people are "wrong".

•   People who might be gay themselves, and are angry about that.

•   People who think "boys should act like boys" and "girls should act like girls".

•   People who think gay people shouldn't have the same rights as heterosexual people and use this as justification for bullying.

•   People who think gay parenting is wrong and pupils should be treated differently because of it.

Why should schools do anything about it?

6.   Schools have a legal duty to ensure homophobic bullying is dealt with in schools. Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, head teachers, with the advice and guidance of governors and the assistance of school staff, must identify and implement measures to promote good behaviour, respect for others, and self discipline amongst pupils, and to prevent all forms of bullying. This includes the prevention of homophobic bullying.

7.   Homophobic bullying can have a negative impact on young people:

•   Bullying can also be linked to poor attendance with studies showing a high degree of absenteeism.

•   Seven out of ten young lesbian and gay people say homophobic bullying affects their work.

•   Bullying can cause low self-esteem, including the increased likelihood of self-harm and the contemplation of suicide.

•   Young people who experience homophobic bullying are unlikely to fulfil the objectives of Every Child Matters and Youth Matters.

How to recognise homophobic bullying

8.   Homophobic bullying can be hard to identify because it may be going on in secret. Sometimes, pupils may not want to tell anyone about it in case teachers/staff or other adults assume they are gay. A recent study found that three in five gay pupils never tell anyone (either at home or school) when they are being bullied. The fact that young people are particularly reluctant to tell is a distinctive aspect of homophobic bullying.

9.   Generally, homophobic bullying looks like other sorts of bullying, but in particular it can include:

•   Verbal abuse – including spreading rumours that someone is gay, suggesting that something or someone is inferior and so they are "gay" – for example, "you're such a gay boy!" or "those trainers are so gay!"

•   Physical abuse – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault, and threatening behaviour.

•   Cyberbullying – using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. Can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

10. Can it happen in Primary schools?

•   Yes. Pupils may not know what the words mean, but can use homophobic language against others as a form of bullying.

- Or, they may bully a pupil who has gay parents/carers or family members.

How to respond to homophobic bullying

11. School staff interact with pupils on a daily basis and are more likely to see, and be told about, incidents of homophobic bullying. It is important that staff responses are, in line with Ofsted guidelines, 'swift, proportionate, discreet, influential and effective'. Staff should feel able to respond effectively to incidents of homophobic bullying, and instil confidence in pupils and parents/carers that issues will be dealt with.

Responding to homophobic language:

12. Casual homophobic language is common in schools but, if it is not challenged, pupils may think that homophobic bullying is acceptable. It is therefore important to challenge homophobic language when it occurs:

- Ensure that pupils know that homophobic language will not be tolerated in schools. Make sure it is included in policies and procedures.

- When an incident occurs, pupils should be informed that homophobic language is offensive, and will not be tolerated.

- If a pupil continues to make homophobic remarks, explain in detail the effects that homophobic bullying has on people.

- If a pupil makes persistent remarks, they should be removed from the classroom and teachers and staff should talk to him or her in more detail about why their comments are unacceptable.

- If the problem persists, involve senior managers. The pupil should be made to understand the sanctions that will apply if they continue to use homophobic language.

- Consider inviting the parents/carers to school to discuss the attitudes of the pupil.

Responding to physical bullying in secondary schools:

13. Like verbal abuse, pupils may be reluctant to report incidents of homophobic bullying because they fear that staff will assume they are gay, even if they are not. Physical abuse can indicate a young person is at risk, and the overarching strategies that are implemented to safeguard pupils might be appropriate in this context, for example working with other agencies, including, if necessary, the police. Schools know how to respond to incidents of physical abuse, and the same strategies should apply when motivated by homophobic bullying. Homophobic violence can be a crime. Anti-bullying policies should be rigorously enforced in order to keep pupils safe from physical abuse.

14. Teachers should refer to the anti-bullying policy and the 'hierarchy of sanctions' when responding to homophobic bullying. In particularly severe circumstances the school should consider permanent exclusion.

Prevention

15. Heads, governors and staff can take a number of steps to help prevent homophobic bullying. Prevention should be a central focus of a school's work to tackle homophobic bullying since taking steps to prevent bullying makes it easier to respond to incidents when they occur. It also enables a school to create an ethos in which pupils are clear that bullying is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

- Ensure relevant **policies** exist, for example, checking that homophobic bullying is included in anti-bullying policies and related policies and procedures.

- **Assess and monitor** the extent of homophobic bullying through anonymous staff and pupil surveys, and existing methods like bullying

boxes. Evaluate the responses received and ensure consistent recording and reporting.

- **Raise awareness** of what homophobic bullying is and how the school will respond. Ensure effective reporting systems are in place to enable pupils to report incidents.

- Evaluate and make use of **curriculum opportunities** in order to instil respect for others.

- Develop effective **intervention strategies**.

- Know how to provide sensitive **support** to lesbian and gay pupils to help them feel safe, and able to tell teachers about incidents of homophobic bullying.

Summary

16. To create an inclusive environment in your school where all pupils feel safe and are able to fulfil their potential requires a whole school approach. This should be integral to your school's mission statement and overall vision. The following ten steps can be taken to address homophobic bullying in your school:

1. ***Acknowledge and identify the problem of bullying.*** *The most important step is to recognise that all sorts of bullying takes place in schools, even if some forms are not immediately visible.*

2. ***Develop policies which recognise the existence of homophobic bullying.*** *Ensure that your anti-bullying policy takes homophobic bullying into account. Take other appropriate action such as challenging use of the word 'gay' and ensuring fast removal of graffiti.*

3. ***Promote a positive social environment.*** *The ethos of the entire school community, including all staff and parents/carers, should be to support all pupils, regardless of their differences and to ensure that they are happy and safe.*

4. ***Address staff training needs.*** *Do not assume that only lesbian, gay and bisexual staff are able to deal with homophobic bullying, but ensure all staff are confident they know how to react to such situations.*

5. ***Provide information and support for pupils.*** *Make age-appropriate information about services and support available to all pupils. Refer pupils to services including ChildLine for additional support.*

6. ***Include addressing bullying, including homophobic bullying, in curriculum planning.*** *Try to include teaching about bullying, including homophobic bullying, in the curriculum as a whole in an age-appropriate way and in accordance with National Curriculum subject frameworks and guidance so that pupils understand and appreciate diversity. This can be done formally in lesson times, but also informally, e.g. by providing information about LGB groups within secondary schools, in accordance with the school's policy.*

7. ***Feel able to use outside expertise.*** *People working in external agencies (such as lesbian and gay charities, youth workers or local telephone helplines) can offer support, both outside and inside the classroom, in addressing homophobic bullying.*

8. ***Encourage role models.*** *Openly gay staff, governors, parents/carers and/or pupils can all be strong role models for the school.*

9. ***Do not make assumptions.*** *Do not assume that all pupils in a class are, or will be, heterosexual. Do not assume that all staff in a school or college are heterosexual. And do not assume that all pupils experiencing homophobic bullying are gay.*

10. ***Celebrate achievements.*** *Make successes known, such as updating the school anti-bullying policy or reducing the incidence of bullying, through tutorial time, newsletters, notice-boards or websites etc.*

Foreword

This guidance provides **school governors, heads, teachers and other staff** with information about how to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) resources on bullying and behaviour, particularly *Safe to Learn*, and is to be used against the backdrop of a school's existing policies.

Homophobic bullying has a significant impact on schools and individuals within that school. Pupils who experience homophobic bullying are more likely to miss school, are less likely to stay in full time education, and are less likely to feel safe, enjoy and achieve, be healthy and make a positive contribution to their community. It should therefore be central to a school's ethos that all pupils feel they are safe and protected from bullying. Creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere in this way builds a sense of community within the school, which will, in turn, develop and sustain the community which the school serves and supports.

This guidance is aimed at maintained schools (including maintained nursery schools), maintained special schools and Pupil Referral Units, though much of the good practice advice is relevant to all types of school.

Where the law is discussed, the guidance offers the Department's view on relevant legal provisions, but it is not intended as definitive legal advice. Only a court can decide on the interpretation of the law. Where a specific legal duty is referred to "must" is used; other advice can be considered as recommended best practice.

The definition of a "parent" or "carer" for the purpose of this guidance is broadly drawn and includes any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where they have a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) with whom the child lives and/or the child's birth parent(s). Where "LGB" is used in the guidance this is the shortened form of "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual".

The guidance was written for the Department by Stonewall[1] and Educational Action Challenging Homophobia[2] (EACH). It was created with the help of children and young people, heads and school staff, community and voluntary sector organisations, representatives of the main faith groups, the professional associations, local authority officers and the trade unions.

[1] www.stonewall.org.uk
[2] www.eachaction.org.uk

Government, the teacher unions and professional associations, children's charities, as well as all faith communities are united in their declaration that all forms of bullying are wrong.

Each of the following 3 sections is structured as:
Introductions
The Legal Framework
Recognition
Prevention
Responding
Monitoring

Further information:
Frequently Asked Questions
Further Resources

Downloadable sheets are provided to be used as summaries and to offer practical tips and information. Sheets are labelled as to whether they are suited to a Primary or Secondary audience, or both.

"Stonewall is proud to have been commissioned by the DCSF to help produce this guidance. The life chances of children bullied at school are often permanently diminished. This tool represents an essential, and much welcome, step forward in the development of joined-up thinking that will help schools and teachers address all forms of bullying effectively."
Ben Summerskill
Chief Executive, Stonewall

"This guidance demonstrates the government's firm commitment to challenging homophobic bullying; an under-reported problem which blights so many lives. This innovative resource provides education professionals with a detailed insight into the issues, offers practical strategies to tackle the problem and help towards improving the emotional and academic potential of everyone."
Jonathan Charlesworth
Director of Projects, EACH

A. ADVICE FOR GOVERNORS

A1: Introductions

A1.1 The purpose of this guidance

This section provides information for governors about their roles and responsibilities in relation to homophobic bullying.

A1.2 Why should governors address homophobic bullying?

Refer to **DL2** with this section
Governors have a legal duty to ensure **all** forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying, are dealt with in schools under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. For more on overall duties to promote the welfare of pupils and to safeguard them see *Safe to Learn* [1] and *Safeguarding Children in Education* [2].

Bullying can cause lasting damage to the self-esteem, happiness and well-being of the children and young people that encounter it. Homophobic bullying can be particularly difficult for the young people affected by it and the DCSF is aware that schools find it a challenging area to address. In fact 34% of all communications received by the EACH helpline are from members of school staff seeking guidance on how best to deal with the homophobic bullying of pupils (EACH, 2007, sample 3361).

Research
Research by Stonewall [3] indicates that young people who experience homophobic bullying are more likely to leave school at 16, sometimes despite being keen to continue their studies. Bullying can also be linked to poor attendance with one survey showing that 72% of LGB adults reported a regular history of absenteeism at school (Rivers, 2000).

As a result, homophobic bullying can negatively affect a young person's attainment and future life chances, and in the most severe cases can lead to young people self-harming and contemplating suicide. A survey by Rivers in 2000 showed that 53% of adult lesbians and gay men who had been bullied at school reported contemplating self-harm as a result, while 40% had gone on to harm themselves. A further study showed that more than 20% had attempted suicide (Mullen, 1999).

A school where any bullying is tolerated creates an unsafe learning and teaching environment for all. Therefore governors have explicit responsibility to ensure that schools respond to and prevent homophobic bullying.

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[1] www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/safetolearn/
[2] www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/familyandcommunity/childprotection/guidance/
[3] www.stonewall.org.uk/schoolreport

A2: The Legal Framework

Legal duties and government policies: what this means for your school

This section sets out the relevant laws and policies in relation to this topic.

Relevant law [see A2.1]
Relevant policies [see A2.2]
Relevant guidance [see A2.3]
Inspections [see A2.4]

A2.1 Relevant law

For general law related to preventing and tackling bullying please see main text of *Safe to Learn.*

**The Employment Equality
(Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003[4]**
These laws protect all **staff** [see C2] in a school against discrimination or harassment on the grounds of their sexual orientation. **Discrimination**, either direct or indirect, involves treating one person less favourably than another on the grounds of their sexual orientation. **Harassment** is unwanted conduct which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or humiliating environment. If employers do not take action to stop such behaviour against staff they run the risk of legal challenge. The laws also cover perceived sexual orientation (if someone bullies because they think a person is lesbian, gay or bisexual even though they are not) or association (such as harassing a person over a friend or family member who is lesbian, gay or bisexual).

Employers should be aware that they are responsible for the actions of their employees, and what people may think of as just "banter" and "having a laugh" can be deemed harassment if it is at the expense of someone else's dignity. For staff who think that they are being discriminated against, support is available through channels such as trade unions and professional associations [see Further resources]. Creating a culture [see A4.2] of respect where difference is valued is important and heads and governors therefore have a key role In ensuring all members of staff, including those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual are treated fairly.

The Equality Act 2006[5]
Part 3 of the Equality Act 2006 gives powers to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of "goods and services". Regulations made under Part 3 came into effect on 30 April 2007 and cover public bodies as well as private, and specifically cover education.

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4 www.opsi.gov.uk/SI/si2003/20031661.htm
5 www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060003.htm

In practice it means for instance, that a pupil could not be refused entry to a school on the grounds that they were, or were thought to be, lesbian or gay, or because they had gay relatives. It would also mean that privileges, such as being a prefect, could not be denied to lesbian or gay pupils. It also means that schools that do not treat homophobic bullying with the same level of seriousness as other forms of bullying could face legal action.

Guidance for schools on their duties and responsibilities under the Sexual Orientation Regulations can be found at:
www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/equality/ sexualorientation/regulations2007/

The Regulations should have no effect on the teaching and curriculum in schools, provided that the subject of sexual orientation is approached in an appropriate manner in line with existing guidance.

Section 28
Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 confused many schools with regards to what could be said in relation to homosexuality due to issues around the word "promotion".

Section 28 was repealed in 2003 and is **no longer law**. There are no, and never have been any, legal barriers to teachers and staff discussing issues around sexual orientation in the classroom and **responding** [see A5] to, and **preventing** [see A4], homophobic bullying.

A2.2 Relevant policies

Every Child Matters[6]
Every Child Matters provides a focus for the education sector and the wider children's workforce to think about supporting children to grow into respectful, confident and socially and emotionally healthy adults.

Those pupils who may be experiencing homophobic bullying will not be able to meet the outcomes Every Child Matters requires:

- **Being healthy:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying are at risk of suffering from low self-esteem, and possibly experiencing mental health issues. They may also take part in risk taking behaviour.

- **Staying safe:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying are at risk from harassment, and physical abuse, and are therefore not being kept safe.

- **Enjoying and achieving:** A young person who is experiencing homophobic bullying is less likely to enjoy school or achieve their full potential. Research suggests they may be reluctant to attend after school activities, or contribute fully to class in case this draws attention to them.

- **Achieving economic well-being:** A young person who experiences homophobic bullying may not do as well at school, and may not stay on to study further. Lesbian and gay pupils are more likely to leave school at 16, even if they do have an interest in continuing their studies.

- **Making a positive contribution:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying will be discouraged from making a positive contribution to their school life and to their community.

Youth Matters [7]
Youth Matters is part of *Every Child Matters* and aims to ensure that all young adults (14-19) are supported to achieve the objectives of *Every Child Matters*. The challenges facing young people, such as "study, money, employment, health, self-esteem and relationships" can provide additional challenges for

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[6] www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/
[7] www.DCSF.gov.uk/publications/youth/

lesbian and gay young people. Learning about one's sexual orientation can however be a positive experience if suitable support structures are in place.

Since homophobic bullying can lead to an increased possibility of self-harm, educational underachievement, truancy, homelessness and even suicide it can prevent the objectives of *Youth Matters* being met.

A2.3 Relevant Guidance

Safe to Learn[8]
The DCSF's recently updated overarching guidance to schools, *Safe to Learn*, provides detailed guidance on how to tackle all forms of bullying. It includes sections on establishing a whole-school policy, practical interventions, data collection and working with parents/carers to strategically tackle bullying in the classroom and beyond. The strategies within it can also be used to tackle homophobic bullying.

Stand Up For Us[9]
Stand up for us, developed by DCSF and the Department of Health in 2004, helps schools challenge and respond to homophobic bullying through establishing and delivering a whole school approach.

DCSF Sex and Relationship Education Guidance[10]
DCSF guidance on Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) states that teaching in this area should demonstrate to pupils the importance of stable, loving relationships and respect and care.

In discussions about stable relationships, heterosexual and same-sex relationships can be discussed. The guidance also states that it is for schools to make sure that the needs of all pupils are met in their SRE. Whatever their developing sexuality, all young people need to feel that SRE is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs.

It is also vital that schools can assure parents/carers that all SRE is age-specific and context specific.

A2.4 Inspection

Ofsted self-evaluation forms[11]
The new Ofsted inspection regime is much more focussed than before with the emphasis on self-evaluation. Bullying is one of the issues that inspectors will look for in a school and Ofsted are increasingly sensitive to bullying motivated by prejudice.

The new forms require schools to evidence *'how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential'* and to what extent *'learners feel safe from bullying and racist incidents'.* In collecting evidence for the SEF a school will therefore look to demonstrate the ways in which it tackles all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying.

The General Teaching Council in its document *The Statement of Professional Values and Practice for Teachers* supports the importance of maintaining total equality of opportunity.

"Teachers work within a framework of legislation, statutory guidance and school policies, with different lines of accountability. Within this framework they place particular importance on promoting equality of opportunity – challenging stereotypes, opposing prejudice, and respecting individuals regardless of age, gender, disability, colour, race, ethnicity, class, religion, marital status or sexual orientation."[12]

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[8] www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/safetolearn/

[9] www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/cat.php?catid=1101&docid=7707

[10] www.dfes.gov.uk/sreguidance/

[11] www.ofsted.gov.uk/schools/sef.cfm

[12] www.gtce.org.uk/standards/disc/StatementOfProfValues

A3: Recognition

A3.1 Homophobic bullying in schools: what does it look like?

Refer to **DL1**, **DL27** and **DL28** with this section
Homophobic bullying is a specific form of bullying and occurs when bullying is motivated by prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people (LGB), or against those perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. It can also be targeted towards pupils who are seen to be "different" in some other way, for example, because they may be considered shy by other pupils. In this way, a person's identity is used to abuse them and homophobic bullying can therefore be experienced by all pupils, regardless of their sexuality.

The bullying suffered can include **verbal** and **physical** abuse by an individual or group towards an individual or group of people. It can consist of:

*   **Verbal abuse** such as suggestive remarks, 'teasing', jokes or name calling

*   Non-verbal abuse such as mimicry, offensive gestures, or body language

*   Ignoring or excluding someone because they are gay or lesbian, or thought to be gay or lesbian

*   Display or distribution of offensive material or graffiti

*   Threatened or actual **physical abuse** or attack

*   Unwanted physical contact, including sexual contact

*   **Cyberbullying** [see A3.2], including via email, chat-rooms and mobile phones.

Homophobic bullying can occur in **primary** and **secondary** schools and through a range of channels.

There are some differences in the ways that **girls** and **boys** bully in this way. Girls tend to use methods of social exclusion, particularly rumour spreading, "funny looks" and ignoring the person being bullied. This can lead to the young woman being attacked feeling excluded and eventually being isolated and unable to re-integrate herself. If this occurs, she may be more likely to take part in risk taking behaviour, such as attending adult venues or meeting people online.

Boys are more likely to be the victims of **physical bullying**. In order to avoid being called 'gay', boys may try to conform to perceived masculine stereotypes. This strengthens the idea that there is such a thing as 'gay behaviour'.

Whilst many schools are becoming more confident to deal with bullying motivated by other kinds of prejudice, such as racist bullying, few have specific measures in place, or the confidence to deal with, homophobic bullying. Research conducted on behalf of the DCSF found that only 6%[13] of schools surveyed had anti-bullying **policies** that addressed homophobic bullying. Whilst some more recent research suggests this figure may now be around 33%[14] in secondary schools, it remains clear that too few schools make specific mention of bullying of this kind. Additionally recent results from Stonewall's ***The School Report*** 2007 [15] show that 76% of LGB pupils attend schools where there is no explicit mention that homophobic bullying is wrong.

This may in part be due to the fact that homophobic bullying can be difficult to recognise. Many pupils

find it extremely **difficult to admit** that they are experiencing homophobic bullying. This can be because they may not want to disclose their sexuality to a member of staff, or because they are not lesbian or gay and/or are embarrassed that they are being bullied in this way.

Some LGB pupils feel that being bullied is inevitable and therefore have no right to report it. Others may not report the bullying as they are concerned about how staff may deal with the problem given the sensitivities involved. As such it cannot be assumed that where no homophobic bullying has been **reported** it is therefore not an issue for that school since, by its nature, homophobic bullying tends to be covert.

"Homophobic language is rife in schools, and nobody seems to do anything about it."
16 year old boy, Birmingham

A3.2 Verbal homophobic bullying

Refer to **DL12** with this section
Homophobic language is a common form of homophobic bullying. It can be casual and is therefore often dismissed as "harmless banter". Schools need to take a consistent approach to tackling any kind of inappropriate language. For more information on overall anti-bullying strategies see DCSF guidance *Safe to Learn*.

Homophobic language and abuse can start in **primary school** where pupils may call each other "gay" or "lesbian" without really understanding what it means. If such usage is not challenged at this stage it can appear acceptable, making it more difficult to address in secondary school. Children may also experience verbal bullying because they have a gay parent.

"They play with a pack of cards, and one card is the gay card. Whoever ends up with the card is the 'gay boy' for the day. These boys are 9 years old".
Primary School Teacher, Sussex

In **secondary school**, homophobic language can be more extensive. Homophobic language can be used:

* To describe an inanimate object or item that is thought to be inferior or laughable – "that pencil case is so gay"

* To bully someone who has gay parents or other family members who are gay

* To suggest that a person is inferior or laughable or in some way not behaving as they should do – "why do you want to play basketball? Are you a gay?"

* To suggest that an action or response is felt to be inappropriate – "I'm not doing the play if I have to hug him, that's gay"

* To intimidate someone or make them feel uncomfortable – "Miss, are you a lesbian?"

* To undermine and bully someone by suggesting that they are gay, including spreading rumours and malicious gossip

* To verbally bully someone who is gay, or who is thought to be gay.

"Everything is gay. No-one even thinks it is a form of bullying."
14 year old girl, Leicester

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[13] DCSF "Don't Suffer in Silence", 2002 (Douglas et al 1999, sample size 307)

[14] Smith, P.K., Smith, C., Osborn, R. & Samara, M. (in press). A content analysis of school anti-bullying policies: Progress and limitations. Educational Psychology in Practice (2007, sample size 115 primary schools, 27 secondary schools).

[15] Sample, 1,140 (2007)

Pupils may also experience **indirect homophobic abuse**, not directed towards a particular person or group, but used when remarks are made to pass negative judgement, such as 'your bag is so gay' or 'that ring tone is gay'. It is important for all staff to **challenge** pupils, explaining the consequences of using 'gay' in a derogatory way. It might be **time consuming** at first, but a consistent "zero-tolerance" approach to such language is central to achieving progress and an environment in which being gay is not thought of as being inferior.

Direct homophobic abuse is directed towards an individual or group of pupils, as either a one off incident or repeatedly. A boy who is called 'poof' or hears 'backs to the wall' when he walks by, or a girl who is called 'dyke' and avoided as she walks through the school corridor, will suffer both short and long term consequences in terms of the harm caused.

In both contexts, it is essential to challenge homophobic **language**. It is the role of **governors** to ensure heads, teachers and other staff feel supported in doing so.

Cyberbullying
Homophobic bullying increasingly takes place through phone calls, text messaging, picture/video messaging, e-mail, online message boards, online chat rooms and on personal web spaces. Through modern technology vicious comments can be made and rumours spread about a person's sexual orientation.

"They set up a website that had all this stuff on it about me being gay… what I'd done, who I'd been with. I was really scared my parents would see it."
14 year old girl, London

Schools need to ensure that they are alert to the risks of cyberbullying and include provision for it within their anti-bullying policies. See *Safe to Learn.*

A3.3 Physical homophobic bullying

Physical abuse can include hitting, punching or kicking. Young people also report that they experience vandalism and theft of property, being threatened with a weapon, and even death threats.

Homophobic physical abuse can also include sexual abuse. Some gay women report that they have experienced sexual abuse and humiliation from both heterosexual women and from men. Some young people who are lesbian or gay feel under pressure to have sex with someone of the same sex or opposite sex, to "prove" that they really are gay. Some young people are also pressured into having sex with someone of the opposite sex in order to "prove" they are not gay. These pressures are heightened by physical abuse and pressure from peers. Physical abuse might indicate that staff need to take steps to **safeguard** the pupil.

Physical homophobic bullying can affect anyone, regardless of whether or not they are gay, and has to be challenged and **stopped** within a school.

"On Tuesday we went on a geography field trip. One boy thought it would be funny to throw stones and mud at me because I was a filthy gay. I shouted at him to stop, we started fighting. We both got detention but only for the fighting."
13 year old boy, London

Primary school pupils can experience physical homophobic bullying, as well as verbal abuse. This may involve hitting, kicking or punching but can also involve inappropriate touching between pupils. These forms of bullying may be motivated by the fact that a child seems "different" in some way. Teachers and staff may not realise that homophobic bullying is playing a part in the other pupils' responses.

"I was first beaten up for being "different" when I was 8. The teachers thought it was rough and tumble."
16 year old boy, London

In **secondary schools**, homophobic bullying commonly manifests itself in the form of physical abuse. ChildLine[16] has identified that boys are more than twice as likely to report being physically bullied than girls. Physical homophobic bullying can take many forms, both sexual and non-sexual. A boy may be forced to undress in front of other pupils to be laughed at, or may be beaten up. As a result of the embarrassment this kind of bullying causes, many pupils do not report it.

"I was coming out of the toilets when a group of girls started giving me grief for being a lesbian. I told them to leave me alone, and then one punched me in the face. I reported it to the teachers but they didn't sort out the problem completely so I went to the police."
16 year old girl, Leeds

A3.4 Who experiences homophobic bullying?

Anyone can experience homophobic bullying:

- Young people who are **lesbian, gay or bisexual** (LGB)

- Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual

- Young people who are thought to be different in some way, for example, might work hard, or may not be as good at sport, or may have a particular hobby or interest

- Young people who have **parents**/carers [15.10] or friends or family who are lesbian, gay or bisexual

- **Teachers and other school staff**, who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Homophobic bullying can also occur when a bully uses **homophobic language** [see A3.2] to describe something, for example: "Those trainers are so gay".

In this context, the general hurtful action is delivered in a way that is homophobic.

The wide use of 'gay' to illustrate 'something bad' creates a hostile environment at school where difference and diversity is not respected.

"Homophobic bullying makes me miserable. Nothing else to say really."
14 year old boy, West Midlands

A3.5 Who does the bullying and why?

There is no one type of person who bullies in this way.

Pupils may justify homophobic bullying because:

- They think that lesbian and gay people should be bullied, because they believe gay people are "wrong"

- They do not think there is anything wrong in bullying someone because of their sexual orientation. This may in part be motivated by an incorrect interpretation of what is taught by the faith to which they belong

- They do not realise that it is bullying

- They may have low self-esteem, poor communication skills, and were possibly bullied themselves

- They think they might be lesbian or gay, and this makes them uncomfortable and hostile to others who are

- They think it is acceptable to bully others who do not conform to their "norm"

- They think **gay parenting** is wrong and pupils should be treated differently because of it.

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[16] www.ChildLine.org.uk/extra/homophobicbullyingsurvey.asp

In addition pupils tend not to intervene in cases of homophobic bullying in case the bully thinks that they might be gay, or they think that it is ok to be gay. This makes the sense of **isolation** more profound for the person being bullied.

For more information on the motivations for bullying and strategies to deal with this, please see *Safe to Learn.*

A4: Prevention

A4.1 Developing policies, practices and procedures

Refer to **DL3**, **DL5** and **DL29** with this section Anti-bullying policies will be school specific, depending on pastoral and management structures within the school. Heads and governors should be aware of **government guidance and legislation** [see A2] concerning homophobic bullying and consider the implications of this when drawing up the anti-bullying policy within their behaviour policy.

Governors need to ensure that explicit reference is made to homophobic bullying in the anti-bullying policy, as well as an explanation of the **sanctions** which will be invoked to deal with such incidents. It is important that the policies, practices and procedures that relate to other forms of bullying (such as racist bullying) are applied equally to homophobic bullying.

Governors should consider **consulting** staff, students and parents/carers about changes to policies. This will provide an opportunity to identify resistance to taking steps to prevent homophobic bullying and will also help secure support when changes are implemented.

Schools should also consider whether their Equal Opportunities policy, designed to ensure fair access to provision and processes, details the school's attitudes to tackling bullying, including homophobic bullying.

For more information on developing an Anti-Bullying policy, see *Safe to Learn*.

A4.2 The role of leadership

School governors provide leadership to a school and ensure that the ethos and culture of the school is reflected in all its workings. It is important that in doing this they make it clear that the school will not tolerate homophobic bullying. The governors will therefore lead the way in considering and including measures to respond to and prevent homophobic bullying in schools. This includes informing and consulting [see B4.4] pupils, parents/carers and staff. Governors need to be clear that homophobic bullying can affect anyone who is perceived as different, and a bullying culture creates an unsafe learning environment for everyone.

A4.3 Supporting the development of staff

Under the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003) [see A2], staff or potential staff cannot be discriminated against on the grounds of sexual orientation. This means that during recruitment sexual orientation should not be relevant to the appointment. The regulations apply to all forms of employment (including teacher training) and schools must take appropriate action in response to homophobic actions or comments by any pupils.

Under the law, all staff must be protected from homophobic bullying (regardless of their sexual orientation) and must feel able to challenge homophobic bullying when it occurs. This means that staff should not experience any form of **direct or indirect discrimination** or victimisation. Therefore governors have a **legal responsibility** to protect

staff from harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation (even if the staff member is not gay). This includes situations when pupils are **harassing** members of staff.

Schools will want to ensure that all new staff understand the policies and sanctions that are in place to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying. Schools can make use of recruitment induction training, INSET (including on non-teaching days), training provided by external organisations including the Local Authority, the programmes conducted by the National Strategies and the wide-range of resources available, to ensure staff feel confident enough to challenge homophobic bullying. A full list of organisations and websites that may help can be found in the **Further Resources** section.

"As a result of dedicated training staff now feel a good deal more positive about challenging homophobic language and behaviour, not only as and when it presents itself, but also in being proactive by raising the issue in class discussions."
A Head-teacher's comments to EACH

Above all, staff members need to feel that they have the unequivocal support of the **senior management team** and other colleagues when dealing with homophobic bullying. If a staff member does not feel competent in dealing with the issue, they will not be best able to **support the pupils** who need their help. Establishing a climate where diversity is celebrated benefits the **entire school community**.

"I spoke to a teacher about being gay and the fact I was getting bullied, but she told me although she was willing to listen, I mustn't tell anyone that we had spoken, or what she had said. It didn't really make me feel better about things."
18 year old woman, Birmingham

A4.4 A whole-school ethos – key milestones

Challenging homophobic bullying takes time. Once decisive action has been taken to tackle it, it is best practice to keep everyone informed of the **progress** made.

Governors should consider including references to homophobic bullying in letters sent to parents/carers about bullying policies, in any agreements drawn up between a school, **parents/carers** and pupils before they are admitted, and in the school prospectus. This does not necessarily mean sending out explicit information about homophobic bullying but including it when references are made to bullying, and anti-bullying policies. Informing families in this way ensures that they understand what is happening and why, which in turn will help foster their support.

Schools might also consider getting in touch with their Local Authority to see if they can offer additional support or provide examples of best practice.

Schools that acknowledge and communicate that they are taking steps to prevent homophobic bullying send a clear message to the community that the work being done is positive and important. Schools that do not celebrate or communicate their plans can look defensive and uncomfortable. It is more difficult to gain the support of **parents and carers** [see B4.10] for this issue if they think there is something wrong or covert about it.

In creating a whole-school ethos which prevents homophobic bullying schools should consider:

•   Making it clear within the school's overall ethos or mission statement that all members of the school community should be able to feel safe and respected

- Displaying **Helpline information** [see Further resources] in an appropriate place in secondary schools (and in line with school policy), ensuring that it is not removed or defaced

- Providing age-appropriate **literature** [see Further resources] that is relevant to the emotional and sexual health of young lesbian and gay people

- Revising the **anti-bullying policy**

- Establishing an **incident log**

- Collating **feedback** requested from both pupils and staff as to the effectiveness of any new policy or reporting system.

This demonstrates that ongoing interest is being maintained in the issue and suggestions will be acted upon.

"One of the ideas we've put into effect immediately is the creation of a series of oversized posters which sit above the reception areas. These make it clear to all who visit, learn and teach that everyone has a right to dignity and to be treated with respect. Sexuality is one of the criteria referred to."
A teacher's feedback to EACH

Achievements should also regularly be celebrated perhaps through the head, or a local dignitary or a senior police officer commending the school on its achievements.

Further national mechanisms also exist that enable a school to develop work to prevent homophobic bullying, and celebrate progress in this area. See *Safe to Learn* for more information.

A4.5 Multi-agency working and safeguarding

Governors and schools in general have a responsibility to **safeguard** children and young people from harm, including bullying. This means that on occasion, schools may want to engage with other agencies in order to protect children and young people from bullying. See Safe to Learn for more information. Governors will also want to be aware that some voluntary organisations can offer support to children or young people experiencing homophobic bullying. **Please see the Further Resources section for more information**.

A5: Responding

A5.1 Responding to homophobic incidents

Governors have a role in supporting **heads** [10] in developing systems and processes to ensure that a range of **interventions**, **sanctions** and systems are in place to respond to homophobic bullying if it occurs.

The first stage in the process of preventing homophobic bullying is to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-bullying measures already in place and consider how these can be applied to homophobic bullying. The **Education and Inspections Act 2006** requires governors to develop a statement of behaviour principles. This statement helps the head develop **policies** to respond to incidents of bullying. Although governors are unlikely to be involved in responding directly to incidents, they still have a role in helping heads develop effective policies.

A **'hierarchy of sanctions'** helps staff respond effectively to bullying. Governors can help shape those sanctions. Governors may want to consider these questions when advising on a hierarchy of sanctions:

1. How can interventions be designed so that minor and perhaps unintended instances of homophobic bullying can be addressed? For example, what sanctions should apply to a pupil using **homophobic language** such as "That's so gay"?

2. How can interventions be used when **homophobic language** is used against an individual? For example, "Pass me the calculator you dyke"?

3. How can interventions be used if a young person is not lesbian, gay or bisexual but is experiencing homophobic bullying?

4. How might interventions be used for a young person who has **gay parents** or family members and is experiencing homophobic bullying as a consequence?

5. How can interventions **escalate** when an individual is experiencing continual homophobic bullying?

6. How can the strategy apply to **group bullying** against an individual?

7. How might the school keep **parents/carers** informed about incidents if the young person is lesbian, gay or bisexual and does not want their parents to find out?

8. When will **multiple agencies** [see A4.5] be involved in incidents?

9. How can schools consider incidents that occur **outside** school (including cyberbullying) when developing escalation strategies?

For more on determining the use of sanctions see *Safe to Learn.*

A6: Monitoring

A6.1 Monitoring and evaluation

Refer to **DL3** and **DL4** with this section
Most schools have mechanisms for recording incidents of bullying, and in particular, racist bullying. **Monitoring incidents** of bullying enables a school to identify patterns of behaviour and the extent of bullying, and then take **pro-active** steps to challenge it. The DCSF therefore recommends as best practice that schools record all incidents of bullying, including homophobic bullying. Schools that use monitoring processes are able to modify their bullying **policies** to respond to specific trends and issues. Incorporating incidents of homophobic bullying into these existing systems is an invaluable means of raising awareness about the issue amongst all staff.

In common with racist bullying, however, not all incidents of homophobic bullying will be reported to teachers and staff. Some schools have therefore included questions about homophobic bullying on **anonymous pupil surveys**. One school found that sexual orientation (real or perceived) was the second most common motivator for bullying (the first was weight). This insight prompted the school to implement **lessons** and **group discussions** that addressed the issue of homophobic bullying.

Good recording procedures allow **heads** to demonstrate that responses have been made to particular bullying incidents, which is useful in the event of a **complaint**. It also enables heads to demonstrate that they are taking steps to tackle bullying, and to asses which initiatives are most effective.

Governors should also aim to evaluate how the school is performing in this area. Evaluating progress also makes it easy to celebrate success and helps those involved keep focused and motivated.

For more information on data collection see *Safe to Learn.*

B. ADVICE FOR HEADS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

B1: Introductions

B1.1 The purpose of this guidance

This section provides information for heads and the senior leadership team about their roles and responsibilities in relation to homophobic bullying.

B1.2 Why should heads address homophobic bullying?

Heads have a **legal duty** to ensure homophobic bullying is dealt with in schools. They are also in the strongest position to state clearly that homophobic bullying is wrong. Under the **Education and Inspections Act 2006** heads must determine measures to be taken with a view to promoting good behaviour, respect for others, and self discipline amongst pupils, and to prevent all forms of bullying. Ministers have made it clear that this includes the **prevention** of homophobic bullying. For more on overall duties to promote the welfare of pupils and to safeguard them see *Safe to Learn* and **www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/ familyandcommunity/childprotection/guidance/**

Bullying can cause lasting damage to the self-esteem, happiness and well-being of the children and young people that encounter it. **Homophobic bullying** can be particularly difficult for the young people affected by it and the DCSF is aware that schools find it a challenging area to address. In fact 34% of all communications received by the EACH helpline are from members of school staff seeking guidance on how best to deal with the homophobic bullying of pupils (EACH, 2007, sample 3361).

Research[17] indicates that young people who experience homophobic bullying are more likely to leave school at 16, often despite being keen to continue their studies. Bullying can also be linked to poor attendance with one survey showing that 72% of LGB adults reported a regular history of absenteeism at school (Rivers, 2000).

As a result homophobic bullying can negatively affect a young person's attainment and future life chances, and in the most severe cases can lead to young people self-harming and contemplating suicide. A survey by Rivers in 2000 showed that 53% of adult lesbians and gay men who had been bullied at school reported contemplating self-harm as a result, while 40% had gone on to harm themselves. A further study showed that more than 20% had attempted suicide (Mullen, 1999).

A school where any bullying is tolerated creates an unsafe learning and teaching environment for all. Therefore the senior leadership team have explicit responsibility to ensure that schools respond to and prevent homophobic bullying. It is important that all **staff**, at all levels, are aware of the school's approach to addressing bullying.

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[17] www.stonewall.org.uk/schoolreport

B2: The Legal Framework

Legal duties and government policies: what this means for your school

This section sets out the relevant laws and policies in relation to this topic.

Relevant law [see B2.1]
Relevant policies [see B2.2]
Relevant guidance [see B2.3]
Inspections [see B2.4]

B2.1 Relevant law

For general law related to preventing and tackling bullying please see main text of *Safe to Learn*.

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003[18]
These laws protect all staff in a school against discrimination or harassment on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Discrimination, either direct or indirect, involves treating one person less favourably than another on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Harassment is unwanted conduct which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or humiliating environment. If employers do not take action to stop such behaviour against staff they run the risk of legal challenge. The laws also cover perceived sexual orientation (if someone bullies because they think a person is lesbian, gay or bisexual even though they are not) or association (such as harassing a person over a friend or family member who is lesbian, gay or bisexual).

Employers should be aware that they are responsible for the actions of their employees, and what people may think of as just "banter" and "having a laugh" can be deemed harassment if it is at the expense of someone else's dignity. For staff who think they are being discriminated against, support is available through channels such as trade unions and professional associations [see Further resources]. Creating a culture of respect where difference is valued is important and heads and governors therefore have a key role in ensuring all members of staff, including those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual are treated fairly.

The Equality Act 2006[19]
Part 3 of the Equality Act 2006 gives powers to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of "goods and services". Regulations made under Part 3 came into effect on 30 April 2007 and cover public bodies as well as private, and specifically cover education.

In practice it means for instance, that a pupil could not be refused entry to a school on the grounds that they were, or were thought to be, lesbian or gay, or because they had gay relatives. It would also mean that privileges, such as being a prefect, could not be denied to lesbian or gay pupils. It also means that schools that do not treat homophobic bullying with the same level of seriousness as other forms of bullying could face legal action.

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[18] www.opsi.gov.uk/SI/si2003/20031661.htm
[19] www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060003.htm

Guidance for schools on their duties and responsibilities under the **Sexual Orientation Regulations** can be found at: **www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/equality/ sexualorientation/regulations2007/**

The Regulations should have no effect on the teaching and curriculum in schools, provided that the subject of sexual orientation is approached in an appropriate manner in line with existing guidance.

Section 28

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 confused many schools with regards to what could be said in relation to lesbian and gay people due to issues around the word "promotion".

Section 28 was repealed in 2003 and is **no longer law**. There are no, and never have been any, legal barriers to teachers and staff discussing issues around sexual orientation in the classroom and responding to, and preventing, homophobic bullying.

B2.2   Relevant policies

Every Child Matters[20]

Every Child Matters provides a focus for the education sector and the wider children's workforce to think about supporting children and young people to grow into respectful, confident and socially and emotionally healthy adults.

Those pupils who may be experiencing homophobic bullying will not be able to meet the outcomes Every Child Matters requires:

* **Being healthy:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying are at risk of suffering from low self-esteem, and possibly experiencing mental health issues. They may also take part in risk taking behaviour.

* **Staying safe:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying are at risk from harassment, and physical abuse, and are therefore not being kept safe.

* **Enjoying and achieving:** A young person who is experiencing homophobic bullying is less likely to enjoy school or achieve their full potential. Research suggests they may be reluctant to attend after school activities, or contribute fully to class in case this draws attention to them.

* **Achieving economic well-being:** A young person who experiences homophobic bullying may not do as well at school, and may not stay on to study further. Lesbian and gay pupils are more likely to leave school at 16, even if they do have an interest in continuing their studies.

* **Making a positive contribution:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying will be discouraged from making a positive contribution to their school life and to their community.

Youth Matters[21]

Youth Matters is part of Every Child Matters and aims to ensure that all young adults (14-19) are supported to achieve the objectives of Every Child Matters. The challenges facing young people, such as "study, money, employment, health, self-esteem and relationships" can provide additional challenges for lesbian and gay young people. Learning about one's sexual orientation can however be a positive experience if suitable support structures are in place.

Since homophobic bullying can lead to an increased possibility of self-harm, educational underachievement, truancy, homelessness and even suicide it can prevent the objectives of *Youth Matters* being met.

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[20] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/
[21] www.DCSF.gov.uk/publications/youth/

B2.3   Relevant Guidance

Safe to Learn[22]
The DCSF's recently updated overarching guidance to schools, *Safe to Learn*, provides detailed guidance on how to tackle all forms of bullying. It includes sections on establishing a whole-school policy, practical interventions, data collection and working with parents/carers to strategically tackle bullying in the classroom and beyond.

Stand Up For Us[23]
Stand up for us, developed by DCSF and the Department of Health in 2004, helps schools challenge and respond to homophobic bullying through establishing and delivering a whole school approach.

DCSF Sex and Relationship Education Guidance[24]
DCSF guidance on Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) states that teaching in this area should demonstrate to pupils the importance of stable, loving relationships and respect and care.

In discussions about stable relationships, heterosexual and same-sex relationships can be discussed. The guidance also states that it is for schools to make sure that the needs of all pupils are met in their SRE. Whatever their developing sexuality, all young people need to feel that SRE is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs.

It is also vital that schools can assure parents/carers that all SRE is age-specific and context specific.

B2.4   Inspection

Ofsted self-evaluation forms[25]
The new Ofsted inspection regime is much more focussed than before with the emphasis on self-evaluation. Bullying is one of the issues that inspectors will look for in a school and Ofsted are increasingly sensitive to bullying motivated by prejudice.

The new forms require schools to evidence *'how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential'* and to what extent *'learners feel safe from bullying and racist incidents'*. In collecting evidence for the SEF a school will therefore look to demonstrate the ways in which it tackles all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying.

The General Teaching Council in its document *The Statement of Professional Values and Practice for Teachers* supports the importance of maintaining total equality of opportunity.

"Teachers work within a framework of legislation, statutory guidance and school policies, with different lines of accountability. Within this framework they place particular importance on promoting equality of opportunity – challenging stereotypes, opposing prejudice, and respecting individuals regardless of age, gender, disability, colour, race, ethnicity, class, religion, marital status or sexual orientation." [26]

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[22] www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/safetolearn/

[23] www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/cat.php?catid=1101&docid=7707

[24] www.dfes.gov.uk/sreguidance/

[25] www.ofsted.gov.uk/schools/sef.cfm

[26] www.gtce.org.uk/standards/disc/StatementOfProfValues

B3: Recognition

B3.1   Homophobic bullying in schools: what does it look like?

Refer to **DL1**, **DL27** and **DL28** with this section
Homophobic bullying is a specific form of bullying and occurs when bullying is motivated by prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people (LGB), or against those perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. It can also be targeted towards pupils who are seen to be "different" in some other way, for example, because they may be considered shy by other pupils. In this way, a person's identity is used to abuse them and homophobic bullying can therefore be experienced by all pupils, regardless of their sexuality.

The bullying suffered can include **verbal** and **physical** abuse by an individual or group towards an individual or group of people. It can consist of:

*   **Verbal abuse** such as suggestive remarks, 'teasing', jokes or name calling

*   Non-verbal abuse such as mimicry, offensive gestures, or body language

*   Ignoring or excluding someone because they are gay or lesbian, or thought to be gay or lesbian

*   Display or distribution of offensive material or graffiti

*   Threatened or actual **physical abuse** or attack

*   Unwanted physical contact, including sexual contact

*   **Cyberbullying** [see B3.2], including via email, chat-rooms and mobile phones.

Homophobic bullying can occur in **primary** and **secondary** schools and through a range of channels.

There are some differences in the ways that **girls** and **boys** bully. Girls tend to use methods of social exclusion, particularly rumour spreading, "funny looks" and ignoring the person being bullied. This can lead to the young woman being attacked feeling excluded and eventually being isolated and unable to re-integrate herself. If this occurs, she may be more likely to take part in risk taking behaviour, such as attending adult venues or meeting people online.

Boys are more likely to be the victims of **physical bullying**. In order to avoid being called 'gay', boys may try to conform to perceived masculine stereotypes. This strengthens the idea that there is such a thing as 'gay behaviour'.

Whilst many schools are becoming more confident to deal with bullying motivated by other kinds of prejudice, such as racist bullying, few have specific measures in place, or the confidence to deal with, homophobic bullying. Research conducted on behalf of the DCSF found that only 6%[27] of schools surveyed had anti-bullying **policies** that addressed homophobic bullying. Whilst some more recent research suggests this figure may now be around 33%[28] in secondary schools, it remains clear that too few schools make specific mention of bullying of this kind. Additionally recent results from Stonewall's **The School Report** 2007 [29] show that 76% of LGB pupils attend schools where there is no explicit mention that homophobic bullying is wrong.

This may in part be due to the fact that homophobic bullying can be difficult to recognise. Many pupils find it extremely **difficult to admit** that they are experiencing homophobic bullying. This can be because they may not want to disclose their sexuality to a member of staff, or because they are not lesbian or gay and/or are embarrassed that they are being bullied in this way.

Some LGB pupils feel that being bullied is inevitable and therefore have no right to report it. Others may not report the bullying as they are concerned about how staff may deal with the problem given the sensitivities involved. As such it cannot be assumed that where no homophobic bullying has been **reported** it is therefore not an issue for that school since, by its nature, homophobic bullying tends to be covert.

"Homophobic language is rife in schools, and nobody seems to do anything about it."
16 year old boy, Birmingham

B3.2   Verbal homophobic bullying

Refer to **DL12** with this section
Homophobic language is a common form of homophobic bullying. It can be casual and is therefore often dismissed as "harmless banter". Schools need to take a consistent approach to tackling any kind of inappropriate language. For more information on overall anti-bullying strategies see DCSF guidance *Safe to Learn*.

Homophobic language and abuse can start in **primary school** where pupils may call each other "gay" or "lesbian" without really understanding what it means. If such usage is not challenged at this stage it can appear acceptable, making it more difficult to

address in secondary school. Children may also experience verbal bullying because they have a gay parent.

"They play with a pack of cards, and one card is the gay card. Whoever ends up with the card is the 'gay boy' for the day. These boys are 9 years old".
Primary School Teacher, Sussex

In **secondary school**, homophobic language can be more extensive. Homophobic language can be used:

• To describe an inanimate object or item that is thought to be inferior or laughable – "that pencil case is so gay"

• To bully someone who has gay parents or other family members who are gay

• To suggest that a person is inferior or laughable or in some way not behaving as they should do – "why do you want to play basketball? Are you a gay?"

• To suggest that an action or response is felt to be inappropriate – "I'm not doing the play if I have to hug him, that's gay"

• To intimidate someone or make them feel uncomfortable – "Miss, are you a lesbian?"

• To undermine and bully someone by suggesting that they are gay, including spreading rumours and malicious gossip

• To verbally bully someone who is gay, or who is thought to be gay.

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[27] DCSF "Don't Suffer in Silence", 2002 (Douglas et al 1999, sample size 307)

[28] Smith, P.K., Smith, C., Osborn, R. & Samara, M. (in press). A content analysis of school anti-bullying policies: Progress and limitations. Educational Psychology in Practice (2007, sample size 115 primary schools, 27 secondary schools).

[29] Sample, 1,140 (2007)

"Everything is gay. No-one even thinks it is a form of bullying."
14 year old girl, Leicester

Pupils may also experience **indirect homophobic abuse**, not directed towards a particular person or group, but used when remarks are made to pass negative judgement, such as 'your bag is so gay' or 'that ring tone is gay'. It is important for all staff to **challenge** pupils, explaining the consequences of using 'gay' in a derogatory way. It might be **time consuming** at first, but a consistent "zero-tolerance" approach to such language is central to achieving progress and an environment in which being gay is not thought of as being inferior.

Direct homophobic abuse is directed towards an individual or group of pupils, as either a one off incident or repeatedly. A boy who is called 'poof' or hears 'backs to the wall' when he walks by, or a girl who is called 'dyke' and avoided as she walks through the school corridor, will suffer both short and long term consequences in terms of the harm caused.

In both contexts, it is essential to challenge homophobic **language**. It is the role of **governors** to ensure heads, teachers and other staff feel supported in doing so.

Cyberbullying
Homophobic bullying increasingly takes place through phone calls, text messaging, picture/video messaging, e-mail, online message boards, online chat rooms and on personal web spaces. Through modern technology vicious comments can be made and rumours spread about a person's sexual orientation.

"They set up a website that had all this stuff on it about me being gay… what I'd done, who I'd been with. I was really scared my parents would see it."
14 year old girl, London

Schools need to ensure that they are alert to the risks of cyberbullying and include provision for it within their anti-bullying policies. See *Safe to Learn*.

B3.3   Physical homophobic bullying

Physical abuse can include hitting, punching or kicking. Young people also report that they experience vandalism and theft of property, being threatened with a weapon, and even death threats.

Homophobic physical abuse can also include sexual abuse. Some gay women report that they have experienced sexual abuse and humiliation from both heterosexual women and from men. Some young people who are lesbian or gay feel under pressure to have sex with someone of the same sex or opposite sex, to "prove" that they really are gay. Some young people are also pressured into having sex with someone of the opposite sex in order to "prove" they are not gay. These pressures are heightened by physical abuse and pressure from peers. Physical abuse might indicate that staff need to take steps to **safeguard** the pupil.

Physical homophobic bullying can affect anyone, regardless of whether or not they are gay, and has to be challenged and **stopped** within a school.

"On Tuesday we went on a geography field trip. One boy thought it would be funny to throw stones and mud at me because I was a filthy gay. I shouted at him to stop, we started fighting. We both got detention but only for the fighting."
13 year old boy, London

Primary school pupils can experience physical homophobic bullying, as well as verbal abuse. This may involve hitting, kicking or punching but can also involve inappropriate touching between pupils. These forms of bullying may be motivated by the fact that a child seems "different" in some way. Teachers and staff may not realise that homophobic bullying is playing a part in the other pupils' responses.

"I was first beaten up for being "different" when I was 8. The teachers thought it was rough and tumble."
16 year old boy, London

In **secondary schools**, homophobic bullying commonly manifests itself in the form of physical abuse. ChildLine [30] has identified that boys are more than twice as likely to report being physically bullied than girls. Physical homophobic bullying can take many forms, both sexual and non-sexual. A boy may be forced to undress in front of other pupils to be laughed at, or may be beaten up. As a result of the embarrassment this kind of bullying causes, many pupils do not report it.

"I was coming out of the toilets when a group of girls started giving me grief for being a lesbian. I told them to leave me alone, and then one punched me in the face. I reported it to the teachers but they didn't sort out the problem completely so I went to the police."
16 year old girl, Leeds

B3.4   Who experiences homophobic bullying?

Anyone can experience homophobic bullying:

- Young people who are **lesbian, gay or bisexual** (LGB)

- Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual

- Young people who are thought to be different in some way, for example, might work hard, or may not be as good at sport, or may have a particular hobby or interest

- Young people who have **parents/carers** [see B4.9] or friends or family who are lesbian, gay or bisexual

- **Teachers and other school staff**, who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Homophobic bullying can also occur when a bully uses **homophobic language** [see A3.2] to describe something, for example: "Those trainers are so gay". In this context, the general hurtful action is delivered in a way that is homophobic.

The wide use of 'gay' to illustrate 'something bad' creates a hostile environment at school where difference and diversity is not respected.

"Homophobic bullying makes me miserable. Nothing else to say really."
14 year old boy, West Midlands

B3.5   Who does the bullying and why?

There is no one type of person who bullies in this way.

Pupils may justify homophobic bullying because:

- They think that lesbian and gay people should be bullied, because they believe gay people are "wrong"

- They do not think there is anything wrong in bullying someone because of their sexual orientation. This may in part be motivated by an incorrect interpretation of what is taught by the faith to which they belong

- They do not realise that it is bullying

- They may have low self-esteem, poor communication skills, and were possibly bullied themselves

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30 www.ChildLine.org.uk/extra/homophobicbullyingsurvey.asp

- They think they might be lesbian or gay, and this makes them uncomfortable and hostile to others who are

- They think it is acceptable to bully others who do not conform to their "norm"

- They think **gay parenting** is wrong and pupils should be treated differently because of it.

In addition pupils tend not to intervene in cases of homophobic bullying in case the bully thinks that they might be gay, or they think that it is ok to be gay. This makes the sense of **isolation** more profound for the person being bullied.

For more information on the motivations for bullying and strategies to deal with this, please see *Safe to Learn*.

B4: Prevention

B4.1 Leadership

Refer to **DL20** with this section
Heads provide leadership to a school. The heads who deal most successfully with challenging homophobic bullying make it clear that such abuse is not tolerated within their school. Individual teachers and members of staff cannot undertake this work in isolation: the whole school should try to be involved. In order for this to be possible, heads and the senior leadership team need to demonstrate clear and unequivocal leadership by recognising the problem and pro-actively taking steps to prevent it. It is not an issue that can be ignored.

"Apparently, we do not have any homophobic bullying in our school so there is no need to do anything about it."
Secondary school teacher, Newcastle

The most important step is to recognise that all sorts of bullying takes place within a school, and it is likely that homophobic bullying is also occurring. Research suggests that only 6%[31] of schools have a fully inclusive **anti-bullying policy** that specifically addresses homophobic bullying. Whilst some more recent research suggests this figure may now be around 33%[32] in secondary schools, it remains clear that too few schools make specific mention of bullying of this kind. 76% of respondents to "Stonewall's *The School Report*"[33] attended schools that did not explicitly mention homophobic bullying in anti-bullying policies. Ignoring the problem creates an unsafe learning environment for all. This section details ways in which heads and the senior management team can prevent homophobic bullying and develop existing strategies to include homophobic bullying.

B4.2 Roles and responsibilities – who does what?

Every member of the school community has a responsibility to prevent homophobic bullying and the head should ensure that staff members understand how to deal with incidents should they occur. Anti-bullying work should be the explicit responsibility of an appropriately senior individual or team within the school. This team or individual will work closely with other members of the community to prevent homophobic bullying.

The following downloads discuss individual roles in more detail:

Governors [DL 2]
Heads [DL19]
Teachers and school staff [DL7]
Parents/Carers [DL10]

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[31] DCSF "Don't Suffer in Silence", 2002 (Douglas et al 1999, sample size 307)

[32] Smith, P.K., Smith, C., Osborn, R. & Samara, M. (in press). A content analysis of school anti-bullying policies: Progress and limitations. Educational Psychology in Practice (2007, sample size 115 primary schools, 27 secondary schools).

[33] Sample, 1,140 (2007)

B4.3 Developing policies to be inclusive

Refer to **DL3** and **DL5** with this section
Anti-bullying policies will be school specific, depending on pastoral and management structures within the school. Heads and governors should be aware of **government guidance and legislation** [see B2.1] concerning homophobic bullying and consider the implications of this when drawing up the anti-bullying policy within their behaviour policy.

The key to developing policies relating to homophobic bullying is to integrate the work into policies and plans that are already in place. Within these documents it is important to make explicit reference to homophobic bullying. It cannot be assumed that staff, pupils and parents/carers will understand that general anti-bullying policies will include homophobic bullying.

Heads need to consider **consulting** staff, students and parents/carers about changes to policies. This will provide an opportunity to identify any resistance to taking steps to prevent homophobic bullying and will also help secure support when changes are implemented.

In reviewing the anti-bullying policy the head will also want to consider what sanctions are appropriate for dealing with homophobic bullying, and how incidents will be dealt with.

A **'hierarchy of sanctions'** helps staff respond effectively to bullying. Heads may want to consider the following when determining a hierarchy of sanctions:

1. How can interventions be designed so that minor and perhaps unintended instances of homophobic bullying can be addressed. For example, what sanctions should apply to a pupil using **homophobic language** such as "That's so gay"?

2. How can interventions be used when **homophobic language** is used against an individual? For example, "Pass me the calculator you dyke"?

3. How can interventions be used if a young person is **not** lesbian, gay or bisexual but is experiencing homophobic bullying?

4. How might interventions be used for a young person who has **gay parents** or family members and is experiencing homophobic bullying as a consequence?

5. How can interventions **escalate** when an individual is experiencing continual homophobic bullying?

6. How can the strategy apply to **group bullying** against an individual?

7. How might the school keep **parents/carers** informed about incidents if the young person is lesbian, gay or bisexual and does not want their parents to find out?

8. When will **multiple-agencies** be involved in incidents?

9. How can schools consider incidents that **occur outside school** (including cyberbullying) when developing escalation strategies?

For more on determining the use of sanctions see *Safe to Learn.*

It is important that the **policies, practices and procedures** that relate to other forms of bullying (such as racist bullying) are applied equally to homophobic bullying. As such heads should consider establishing a **homophobic bullying incident log.**

The procedure for dealing with homophobic incidents should be clear and **everyone** in the school should be familiar with it. The DCSF advises as best practice that incidents that are recorded should be reviewed and pupils given appropriate **support** in the same way that they would for other forms of bullying.

Heads should also consider other policies where it might be necessary to include homophobic bullying. This might include:

- School improvement policies

- Equal Opportunities policy

- Pupil support and safeguarding policies

- **Staffing** policies

- Site policies including before/after school, break, lunchtime and travel management supervision routines.

B4.4   Staff, pupils, parents and governors – raising awareness

Refer to **DL10** and **DL7** with this section
Raising awareness about the issue of homophobic bullying is a key element to preventing it. When **data** indicates that homophobic bullying exists in a school, a head has a **responsibility** to act on that data and take targeted steps to prevent homophobic bullying.

Data and audits about the nature and extent of homophobic bullying in schools should be shared with **governors**. Governors can help a head develop policies and strategies for preventing homophobic bullying. Getting them on board is a crucial aspect of any prevention plan.

Writing to **parents/carers** about the findings of any audit and data collection provides an opportunity to explain to them that homophobic bullying can affect anyone perceived as different. Engaging the support of parents and carers from the outset will help answer any concerns they may have about preventing homophobic bullying and ensure their continued support. Parents/carers can have a positive role to play in helping to tackle homophobic bullying by engaging children and young people with sensitive issues at home and ensuring their children and young people understand the concepts of respect and community.

Staff should understand the nature and extent of homophobic bullying in schools and feel empowered to **respond and prevent it**. Staff will feel more confident about preventing homophobic bullying if the head and governors are clear about its importance.

Pupils should understand that the school will not tolerate any homophobic bullying and that homophobic comments and behaviour are prejudiced. If this message is consistent amongst the staff including the head, the senior team, and the anti-bullying leads, pupils will understand that the whole school is committed to **preventing** and **responding** to homophobic bullying. Heads can raise awareness through messages in the prospectus, during tutorial time, in **anti-bullying** policies and through **curriculum development**.

B4.5 Using curriculum opportunities and developing social and emotional skills

Refer to **DL6, DL21, DL22, DL23** and **DL24** with this section
Schools should refer to what the guidance on the sexual orientation regulations says about the curriculum. The guidance can be found at:
www.teachernet.gov.uk/sholeschoole/equality/ sexualorientation/regulations2007/

The curriculum for any maintained school must be balanced and broadly based and should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural and cognitive development of pupils and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. As part of this the school curriculum should promote equal opportunities, enable pupils to challenge discrimination and stereotyping and introduce them to the concept that any kind of bullying is morally wrong.

Through **curriculum** subjects, including English, Geography, History, Art, Music, Drama, PE, Citizenship and PSHE opportunities may be provided to introduce issues around homophobic bullying. More widely General Studies and Religious Education lessons can be used as vehicles for discussing this topic, although they should not be considered the only subjects where it is appropriate to raise issues around bullying and discrimination. In raising issues around religious perspectives it is important to distinguish that bullying behaviour is entirely different from religious belief.

SEAL
The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme is being implemented in primary schools, and the rollout of SEAL to secondary schools starts in September 2007. Primary SEAL provides a whole-curriculum framework and resource to develop pupils' social and emotional skills, through a whole-school approach. It focuses on five key areas of learning: self-awareness, empathy, managing feelings, motivation and social skills. Developing skills in these areas is likely to help reduce bullying. SEAL helps schools to meet many of the requirements of the non-statutory PSHE framework and to acquire National Healthy School status through its contribution to promoting emotional health and wellbeing.

For more information on SEAL please visit **www.teachernet.gov.uk/SEAL** or see *Safe to Learn*.

B4.6 Different families

Refer to **DL13** with this section
The concept of what constitutes a family has changed over the years. Increasingly families can include:

- One parent, either a mother or father

- One or two grandparents

- One parent, and the partner of a parent (either same sex or opposite sex)

- Parents who have adopted a child

- Siblings from different families and different ages

- Parents who live with a child and a parent who does not live with the child

- Looked after children and young people, including those in long and short-term care.

It is likely that some children and young people in a primary school and secondary school will either have, or know about, same-sex parenting.

"My partner, my daughter's biological father, and I all have parental responsibility. The school was a bit confused to begin with but I think my daughter explained it all to them!"
Parent of a primary school pupil, Birmingham

Children and young people can experience bullying because of their family arrangements, regardless of whether or not a parent is gay. Some pupils report that they experience **homophobic bullying** because they come from a one-parent family, and it is assumed by peers that the parent is gay.

Acknowledging and recognising difference in families, and ensuring that those differences are not seen to be inferior, is central to tackling homophobic bullying.

Preventing homophobic bullying of this sort relies on a broader and more inclusive approach to discussing families and parents and pupils should understand that different family structures exist.

"All my friends know my mum is a lesbian and she has a girlfriend. I know I'm not the only one in school either, though I'm probably the most open. I've learnt some quick lines if anyone has a go. Most don't these days."
14 year old girl, Lancaster

B4.7   Staff development and training

Refer to **DL7** with this section
Under the **Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003)** [see B2], staff or potential staff cannot be discriminated against on the grounds of sexual orientation. This means that during recruitment sexual orientation should not be relevant to the appointment. The regulations apply to all forms of employment (including teacher training) and schools must take appropriate action in response to homophobic actions or comments by any pupils.

Under the law, all staff must be protected from homophobic bullying (regardless of their sexual orientation) and must feel able to challenge homophobic bullying when it occurs. This means that staff should not experience any form of direct or indirect **discrimination** or victimisation. This means that heads have a legal responsibility to protect staff from **harassment** on the grounds of sexual orientation (even if the staff member is not gay). This includes situations when pupils are harassing staff members.

Schools should ensure that all new staff understand the **policies** and **sanctions** that are in place to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying. Schools can make use of recruitment induction training, INSET (including on non-teaching days), training provided by external organisations including the Local Authority, the programmes conducted by the National Strategies, and the wide-range of

resources available, to ensure all staff feel confident enough to challenge homophobic bullying. A full list of organisations and websites that may help can be found in the **Further Resources** section.

"As a result of dedicated training staff now feel a good deal more positive about challenging homophobic language and behaviour not only as and when it presents itself but also to be proactive in raising the issue in class discussions."
A head-teacher's comments to EACH

Above all staff members need to feel that they have the unequivocal support of the senior management team and other colleagues when dealing with homophobic bullying. If a staff member does not feel competent in dealing with the issue, they will not be best able to **support** the pupils who need their help. Establishing a climate where diversity is celebrated benefits the entire **school community**.

"I spoke to a teacher about being gay and the fact I was getting bullied, but she told me although she was willing to listen, I mustn't tell anyone that we had spoken, or what she had said. It didn't really make me feel better about things."
18 year old woman, Birmingham

B4.8   Developing pupil support systems

Refer to **DL14, DL15** and **DL26** with this section
In order to safeguard young people all pupils need to feel able to **report** incidents of homophobic bullying and feel confident that the school will deal with them effectively. Schools should demonstrate that all members of the community will be respected and **listened to** regardless of sexual orientation in order to prevent pupils feeling embarrassed about speaking out.

Schools also need to demonstrate that **anyone** can experience homophobic bullying, regardless of whether or not they are gay.

Homophobic bullying is distinct from other forms of bullying since additional barriers exist to admitting it is occurring. If a pupil is experiencing racist bullying, they may feel able to discuss this with their **parents or carers**. Whilst it is desirable for a pupil who is experiencing homophobic bullying to confide in their parents/carers, evidence suggests that 75% of young people feel that they are unable to do so as they may be worried that parents or carers will either find out that they are gay, or assume that they are, even if this is not the case (Source: The School Report).

"I'm not gay, but always been rubbish at sports at stuff. My dad already thinks I'm lame. If he found out the other boys call me a poof, it would just prove him right I reckon."
14 year old boy, Cardiff

Schools need to develop robust **confidentiality** policies that pupils understand and be able to offer help to pupils who are unable to access support at home. In terms of confidentiality, it is important to bear in mind that "coming out" or a disclosure about consensual sexual activity, is not in itself a reason to breach confidentiality. However, an admission of behaviour, which places the young person, or other young people at risk of significant harm, regardless of their sexuality, may constitute a need to breach confidence. School confidentiality policies should be in line with local child protection protocols which reflect the principles of Working Together (2006).

Pupils may also be reluctant to use pupil support systems for example, peer mentoring systems. All those involved in anti-bullying work should understand the sensitivities around homophobic bullying.

It is important to involve pupils in developing the policies in place on homophobic bullying to improve young people's confidence that the school will deal with the bullying, and to demonstrate to all pupils that bullying of this nature will not be tolerated.

B4.9   Working with pupils who bully

Refer to **DL9, DL25** and **DL20** with this section
If pupils have not previously been taught that homophobic bullying is wrong, it may take time to make pupils understand that their behaviour is inappropriate. Although schools can develop and implement immediate responses to homophobic bullying incidents, schools may also want to develop a longer term strategy to help change attitudes.

This work is achieved by making use of **curriculum** opportunities, working in partnership with pupils to develop policies, and ensuring that pupils understand what **sanctions** will be applied if they fail to follow the rules. Discussions and ideas about sexual orientation are not shut down. Examining sexual orientation in a positive, constructive way, rather than just as a response to bullying, helps tackle discrimination and prejudice, and thus helps prevent homophobic bullying in the future.

Some pupils may be reluctant to stop bullying because they think their stance is justified. This position can sometimes be supported by **parents/ carers**. Schools need to be very clear that homophobic bullying is not tolerated under any circumstances and that **sanctions** and consequences apply.

B4.10 Working with parents and carers

Refer to **DL10** with this section
No **parent or carer** wants their child to be bullied. Any young person, whether they are gay or not, can experience homophobic bullying. Young people however often do not tell their parents/carers about homophobic bullying, because they do not want their parents to think that they are gay.

Schools will need to work with **parents and carers** to help prevent homophobic bullying. By working in partnership, parents/carers will be more aware of the issues around homophobic bullying, and are more

likely to tell the school if they think their child is experiencing it. Communicating and consulting with parents/carers about this issue will also help challenge any resistance to the subject. Special consideration may need to be given with regards how best to communicate with those caring for looked after children.

Parents/carers, like pupils, may think that homophobic bullying is acceptable. Schools will want to consider explaining to parents/carers what homophobic bullying is, and what strategies there are in place to prevent it and respond to it. Some parents/carers may assume that if a school is preventing homophobic bullying, they are therefore discussing gay sex, or encouraging pupils to be gay. This is not the case, and this needs to be made clear to parents/carers. The DCSF advises that schools consider using vehicles such as the prospectus to emphasise that **anti-bullying policies** include homophobic bullying. Letters home about bullying may also make reference to homophobic bullying.

B4.11 Multi-agency working and safeguarding

Heads have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people from harm, including bullying. This means that on occasion, schools may want to engage with other agencies in order to protect children and young people from bullying. See *Safe to Learn* for more information. Heads will want to be aware that some voluntary organisations can offer support to children or young people experiencing homophobic bullying. **Please see the Further Resources section for more information.**

B4.12 A whole-school ethos – key milestones

Challenging homophobic bullying takes time. Once decisive action has been taken to tackle it, it is best practice to keep everyone informed of the **progress** made.

Schools might also consider getting in touch with their Local Authority to see if they can offer additional support or provide examples of best practice.

Schools that acknowledge and communicate that they are taking steps to prevent homophobic bullying send a clear message to the community that the work being done is positive and important. Schools that do not **celebrate** or communicate their plans can look defensive and uncomfortable. It is more difficult to gain the support of **parents and carers** for this issue if they think there is something wrong or covert about it.

In creating a whole-school ethos which prevents homophobic bullying schools should consider:

- Making it clear within the school's overall ethos or mission statement that all members of the school community should be able to feel safe and respected

- Displaying **information** [see Further resources] around secondary schools and also ensuring that it is not removed or defaced

- Providing age-appropriate **literature** [see Further resources] that is relevant to the emotional and sexual health of young lesbian and gay people

- Revising the **anti-bullying policy**

- Establishing an **incident log**

- Collating feedback requested from both pupils and staff as to the effectiveness of any new policy or reporting system.

This demonstrates that ongoing interest is being maintained in the issue and suggestions will be acted upon.

"One of the ideas we've put into effect immediately is the creation of a series of oversized posters which sit above the reception areas. These make it clear to all who visit, learn and teach that everyone has a right to dignity and to be treated with respect. Sexuality is one of the criteria referred to."
A teacher's feedback to EACH

The DCSF advises that achievements should also regularly be celebrated perhaps through the head, or a local dignitary or a senior police officer commending the school on its achievements.

Further national mechanisms also exist that enable a school to develop work to prevent homophobic bullying, and celebrate progress in this area. See *Safe to Learn* for more information.

B5: Responding

B5.1 Responding to homophobic incidents

Adopting a "zero-tolerance" approach towards homophobic bullying is vital. Schools need to make it clear to pupils that homophobic comments are as serious as racist comments, and homophobic incidents are as serious as other forms of bullying.

Schools should respond consistently and effectively to incidents of homophobic bullying. This will indicate to pupils that incidents are taken seriously, thereby encouraging them to report incidents, and discouraging those behind the incidents.

Schools will already have procedures in place to respond to incidents of bullying and these procedures, where appropriate, should be applied to incidents of homophobic bullying.

Procedures need to aim:

• To protect the person experiencing homophobic bullying

• To hold to account the person causing the harm

• To repair, as far as possible, relationships between pupils

Part of these procedures will include helping pupils **understand** why homophobic bullying is unacceptable. This may mean explaining to pupils about lesbian and gay people, and their rights in society.

B5.2 How to respond to verbal incidents

Refer to **DL17** and **DL17** with this section
Staff need to feel able to discuss issues of homophobic bullying with pupils and **parents/ carers** and deal with incidents quickly and effectively before a situation becomes more serious. Homophobic language is often used without thinking and is often ignored because it is difficult to know how to respond. Homophobic language in schools needs to be challenged because ignoring it allows homophobic bullying to continue to escalate.

Any action to challenge **homophobic language** needs to be taken within the framework of the school's behaviour policy.

"They say gay means lame, and it is nothing to do with hating gays. It doesn't make me feel like that though".
14 year old boy, London

Those doing the bullying
Staff should consistently make it clear that homophobic comments are unacceptable and ensure that pupils who experience it feel **supported**. Staff need to be sensitive when talking to pupils about incidents, taking into account the worries the pupil may have.

"When we hear homophobic language, we make it clear it is not acceptable: I will not tolerate language like that in my classroom. If they say it's just a bit of banter, I make them write me an essay on why homophobic language is not acceptable in our schools."
Secondary school teacher, Manchester

If a pupil continues to use **homophobic language**, staff need to point out the effect that their language may be having on other people. This could include asking the pupil to write why homophobic language is unacceptable in school.

If the pupil still continues to engage in homophobic bullying, they could be spoken to by a senior member of staff. Schools may also consider giving a detention, ensuring first that parents have been informed about this policy and have been given 24 hours' prior notice if the detention occurs before or after the school day, or at lunchtime.

If the problem persists schools may want to consider directly contacting **parents or carers** to discuss the issue, and reminding them about the school's anti-bullying **policy**. In doing so it may also be necessary to explain to the parents or carers why **homophobic language** is unacceptable.

For more on the use of sanctions see *Safe to Learn* and *School Discipline and Pupil Behaviour Policies: Guidance for Schools.*

Those on the receiving end
It is important to create a **secure time and space** where pupils can report incidents. It is essential that when a young person is reporting an incident or incidents, the staff member does not assume the pupil is either gay or heterosexual. Staff should listen carefully to the young person's experience, and work with them to identify appropriate responses. The school's anti-bullying policy and 'hierarchy of **sanctions'** should form the basis of the response.

If a pupil knows that staff will respond to **verbal bullying** with sensitivity, they may feel more comfortable about discussing other issues (including issues relating to **sexual orientation**).

When dealing with homophobic verbal abuse in **primary schools** staff need to take account of the fact the motivations for using such language are likely to be different and should therefore respond accordingly.

"We hear "gay" as a term of abuse every single day. The children may not know exactly what it means, but they know they are using it as an insult. That's why we need to tackle it at this stage. "
Primary School Head Teacher, North East

B5.3 Responding to physical incidents

Refer to **DL18** with this section
Like **verbal abuse**, pupils may be reluctant to **report** incidents because they fear that staff will assume they are gay. Physical abuse can indicate a young person is at risk, and the overarching strategies that are implemented to safeguard pupils might be appropriate in this context, for example working with other **agencies**, including (if necessary) the police. Homophobic violence can be a crime. Anti-bullying policies should be rigorously enforced in order to keep pupils **safe** from physical abuse.

Teachers and other staff members should refer to the **anti-bullying policy** and the **'hierarchy of sanctions'** when responding to homophobic bullying. In particularly severe circumstances the school should consider permanent exclusion.

The Department's guidance on exclusions 2006 states:

"A decision to exclude a pupil should be taken only:
a) in response to serious breaches of the schools behaviour policy; and
b) if allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school."

Only the head or teacher in charge of a Pupil Referral Unit (or, in the absence of the head or teacher in charge, the most senior teacher who is acting in that role) can exclude a pupil.

The guidance further states:

"In cases where a head has permanently excluded a pupil for: … persistent and defiant misbehaviour, including bullying (which would include racist or homophobic bullying), or repeated possession and/or use of an illegal drug on school premises, the Secretary of State would not normally expect the governing body or an Independent Appeal Panel to reinstate the pupil." [34]

Note this guidance is due to be updated Summer 2007 when the wording may change slightly.

B5.4 Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils

Refer to **DL14**, **DL15** and **DL17** with this section
If pupils receive a supportive reaction from staff, they are more likely to feel able to tell someone about incidents of homophobic bullying. Staff should feel comfortable enough to deal with a situation where a pupil comes out to them. Staff should consider therefore:

- Listening and being **supportive**

- Discussing how **parents** and carers might respond

- Telling pupils their **confidentiality** will be respected, and pointing out the circumstances when this may not be possible

- Asking them how they would like to proceed

- Recommending other **resources**, such as local youth groups and websites.

"My teacher told me that we have to all make choices and some choices are bad choices and some choices are good choices. She made it clear that I was about to make a bad choice."
15 year old girl, Cumbria

Staff who respond negatively to pupils who come out can compound the sense of isolation that a young person may be experiencing. Pupils may be reluctant to tell anyone else, and will not feel able to report incidents of homophobic bullying if this occurs.

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[34] Source: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/exclusion/guidance/part1/

B6: Monitoring

B6.1   Monitoring and evaluation

Refer to **DL3** and **DL4** with this section
Most schools have mechanisms for recording incidents of bullying, and in particular, racist bullying. **Monitoring incidents** of bullying enables a school to identify patterns of behaviour and the extent of bullying, and then take **pro-active** steps to challenge it. The DCSF therefore recommends as best practice that schools record all incidents of bullying, including homophobic bullying. Schools that use monitoring processes are able to modify their bullying **policies** to respond to specific trends and issues. Incorporating incidents of homophobic bullying into these existing systems is an invaluable means of raising awareness about the issue amongst all staff.

In common with racist bullying, however, not all incidents of homophobic bullying will be reported to teachers and staff. Some schools have therefore included questions about homophobic bullying on **anonymous pupil surveys**. One school found that sexual orientation (real or perceived) was the second most common motivator for bullying (the first was weight). This insight prompted the school to implement **lessons** and **group discussions** that addressed the issue of homophobic bullying.

Heads can also use existing informal mechanisms for reporting bullying, such as report boxes. Heads can also ask their staff whether they have witnessed homophobic bullying. **Studies**[35] indicate that one in four secondary school teachers is aware of physical homophobic bullying and four in five are aware of verbal homophobic bullying. Schools will have developed systems for collecting data relating to incidents of racist bullying. These systems can be applied to homophobic bullying.

Good recording procedures allow heads to demonstrate that responses have been made to particular bullying incidents, which is useful in the event of a **complaint**. It also enables heads to demonstrate that they are taking steps to tackle bullying, and to assess if new initiatives are effective.

Evaluating progress also makes it easy to celebrate success and helps those involved keep focused and motivated. Heads should aim to evaluate progress on a termly basis, and report back to governors regularly. This will help governors think about the progress that is being made, and what is left to be done.

For more information on data collection see *Safe to Learn.*

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[35] www.stonewall.org.uk/educationforall

C. ADVICE FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

C1: Introductions

C1.1 The purpose of this guidance

This section provides information for teachers and support staff about their roles and responsibilities in relation to homophobic bullying.

C1.2 Why should school staff address homophobic bullying?

Teachers and school staff are most likely to see, and be in a position to **respond** to, incidents of homophobic bullying. Schools have a legal duty to respond to bullying and under the **Education and Inspections Act 2006** Heads must determine measures to be taken with a view to promoting good behaviour, respect for others, and self discipline amongst pupils, and to prevent all forms of bullying. Ministers have made it clear that this includes homophobic bullying. For more on overall duties to promote the welfare of pupils and to safeguard them see *Safe to Learn* and **www.teachernet.gov.uk/ wholeschool/familyandcommunity/ childprotection/guidance/**

Bullying can cause lasting damage to the self-esteem, happiness and well-being of the children and young people that encounter it. **Homophobic bullying** can be particularly difficult for the young people affected by it and the DCSF is aware that schools find it a challenging area to address. In fact 34% of all communications received by the EACH helpline are from members of school staff seeking guidance on how best to deal with the homophobic bullying of pupils (EACH, 2007, sample 3361).

Research[36] indicates that young people who experience homophobic bullying are more likely to leave school at 16, often despite being keen to continue their studies. Bullying can also be linked to poor attendance with one survey showing that 72% of LGB adults reported a regular history of absenteeism at school (Rivers, 2000).

As a result homophobic bullying can negatively affect a young person's attainment and future life chances, and in the most severe cases can lead to young people self-harming and contemplating suicide. A survey by Rivers in 2000 showed that 53% of adult lesbians and gay men who had been bullied at school reported contemplating self-harm as a result, while 40% had gone on to harm themselves. A further study showed that more than 20% had attempted suicide (Mullen, 1999).

A school where any bullying is tolerated creates an unsafe learning and teaching environment for all. Therefore the senior leadership team have explicit responsibility to ensure that schools respond to and prevent homophobic bullying. It is important that all **staff**, at all levels, are aware of the school's approach to addressing bullying.

[36] www.stonewall.org.uk/schoolreport

C2: The Legal Framework

Legal duties and government policies: what this means for your school

This section sets out the relevant laws and policies in relation to this topic.

Relevant law [see C2.1]
Relevant policies [see C2.2]
Relevant guidance [see C2.3]
Inspections [see C2.4]

C2.1 Relevant law

For general law related to preventing and tackling bullying please see main text of *Safe to Learn.*

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003[37]

These laws protect all **staff** in a school against discrimination or harassment on the grounds of their sexual orientation. **Discrimination**, either direct or indirect, involves treating one person less favourably than another on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Harassment is unwanted conduct which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or humiliating environment. If employers do not take action to stop such behaviour against staff they run the risk of legal challenge. The laws also cover perceived sexual orientation (if someone bullies because they think a person is lesbian, gay or bisexual even though they are not) or association (such as harassing a person over a friend or family member who is lesbian, gay or bisexual).

Employers should be aware that they are responsible for the actions of their employees, and what people may think of as just "banter" and "having a laugh" can be deemed harassment if it is at the expense of someone else's dignity. For staff who think they are being discriminated against, support is available through channels such as trade unions and professional associations [see Further resources]. Creating a culture of respect where difference is valued is important and heads and governors therefore have a key role In ensuring all members of staff, including those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual are treated fairly.

The Equality Act 2006 [38]

Part 3 of the Equality Act 2006 gives powers to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of "goods and services". Regulations made under Part 3 came into effect on 30 April 2007 and cover public bodies as well as private, and specifically cover education.

In practice it means for instance, that a pupil could not be refused entry to a school on the grounds that they were, or were thought to be, lesbian or gay, or because they had gay **relatives**. It would also mean that privileges, such as being a prefect, could not be denied to lesbian or gay pupils. It also means that schools that do not treat homophobic bullying with the same level of seriousness as other forms of bullying could face legal action.

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37 www.opsi.gov.uk/SI/si2003/20031661.htm
38 www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060003.htm

Guidance for schools on their duties and responsibilities under the **Sexual Orientation Regulations** can be found at:
www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/equality/ sexualorientation/regulations2007/

The Regulations should have no effect on the teaching and curriculum in schools, provided that the subject of sexual orientation is approached in an appropriate manner in line with existing guidance.

Section 28

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 confused many schools with regards to what could be said in relation to lesbian and gay people due to issues around the word "promotion".

Section 28 was repealed in 2003 and is **no longer law**. There are no, and never have been any, legal barriers to teachers and staff discussing issues around sexual orientation in the classroom and **responding** to, and **preventing**, homophobic bullying.

C2.2 Relevant policies

Every Child Matters[39]

Every Child Matters provides a focus for the education sector and the wider children's workforce to think about supporting children and young people to grow into respectful, confident and socially and emotionally healthy adults.

Those pupils who may be experiencing homophobic bullying will not be able to meet the outcomes Every Child Matters requires:

- **Being healthy:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying are at risk of suffering from low self-esteem, and possibly experiencing mental health issues. They may also take part in risk taking behaviour.

- **Staying safe:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying are at risk from harassment, and physical abuse, and are therefore not being kept safe.

- **Enjoying and achieving:** A young person who is experiencing homophobic bullying is less likely to enjoy school or achieve their full potential. Research suggests they may be reluctant to attend after school activities, or contribute fully to class in case this draws attention to them.

- **Achieving economic well-being:** A young person who experiences homophobic bullying may not do as well at school, and may not stay on to study further. Lesbian and gay pupils are more likely to leave school at 16, even if they do have an interest in continuing their studies.

- **Making a positive contribution:** Young people experiencing homophobic bullying will be discouraged from making a positive contribution to their school life and to their community.

Youth Matters[40]

Youth Matters is part of Every Child Matters and aims to ensure that all young adults (14-19) are supported to achieve the objectives of Every Child Matters. The challenges facing young people, such as "study, money, employment, health, self-esteem and relationships" can provide additional challenges for lesbian and gay young people. Learning about one's sexual orientation can however be a positive experience if suitable support structures are in place.

Since homophobic bullying can lead to an increased possibility of self-harm, educational underachievement, truancy, homelessness and even suicide it can prevent the objectives of *Youth Matters* being met.

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[39] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/
[40] www.DCSF.gov.uk/publications/youth/

C2.3 Relevant Guidance

Safe to Learn[41]

The DCSF's recently updated overarching guidance to schools, *Safe to Learn*, provides detailed guidance on how to tackle all forms of bullying. It includes sections on establishing a whole-school policy, practical interventions, data collection and working with parents/carers to strategically tackle bullying in the classroom and beyond.

Stand Up For Us[42]

Stand up for us, developed by DCSF and the Department of Health in 2004, helps schools challenge and respond to homophobic bullying through establishing and delivering a whole school approach.

DCSF Sex and Relationship Education Guidance[43]

DCSF guidance on Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) states that teaching in this area should demonstrate to pupils the importance of stable, loving relationships and respect and care.

In discussions about stable relationships, heterosexual and same-sex relationships can be discussed. The guidance also states that it is for schools to make sure that the needs of all pupils are met in their SRE. Whatever their developing sexuality, all young people need to feel that SRE is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs.

It is also vital that schools can assure parents/carers that all SRE is age-specific and context specific.

C2.4 Inspection

Ofsted self-evaluation forms[44]

The new Ofsted inspection regime is much more focussed than before with the emphasis on self-evaluation. Bullying is one of the issues that inspectors will look for in a school and Ofsted are increasingly sensitive to bullying motivated by prejudice.

The new forms require schools to evidence *'how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential'* and to what extent *'learners feel safe from bullying and racist incidents'.* In collecting evidence for the SEF a school will therefore look to demonstrate the ways in which it tackles all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying.

The General Teaching Council in its document *The Statement of Professional Values and Practice for Teachers* supports the importance of maintaining total equality of opportunity.

"Teachers work within a framework of legislation, statutory guidance and school policies, with different lines of accountability. Within this framework they place particular importance on promoting equality of opportunity – challenging stereotypes, opposing prejudice, and respecting individuals regardless of age, gender, disability, colour, race, ethnicity, class, religion, marital status or sexual orientation." [45]

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[41] www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/safetolearn/

[42] www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/cat.php?catid=1101&docid=7707

[43] www.dfes.gov.uk/sreguidance/

[44] www.ofsted.gov.uk/schools/sef.cfm

[45] www.gtce.org.uk/standards/disc/StatementOfProfValues

C3: Recognition

C3.1 Homophobic bullying in schools: what does it look like?

Refer to **DL1**, **DL27** and **DL28** with this section
Homophobic bullying is a specific form of bullying and occurs when bullying is motivated by prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people (LGB), or against those perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. It can also be targeted towards pupils who are seen to be "different" in some other way, for example, because they may be considered shy by other pupils. In this way, a person's identity is used to abuse them and homophobic bullying can therefore be experienced by all pupils, regardless of their sexuality.

The bullying suffered can include **verbal** and **physical** abuse by an individual or group towards an individual or group of people. It can consist of:

• **Verbal abuse** such as suggestive remarks, 'teasing', jokes or name calling

• Non-verbal abuse such as mimicry, offensive gestures, or body language

• Ignoring or excluding someone because they are gay or lesbian, or thought to be gay or lesbian

• Display or distribution of offensive material or graffiti

• Threatened or actual **physical abuse** or attack

• Unwanted physical contact, including sexual contact

• **Cyberbullying** [14.1], including via email, chat-rooms and mobile phones.

Homophobic bullying can occur in **primary** and **secondary** schools and through a range of channels.

There are some differences in the ways that **girls** and **boys** bully. Girls tend to use methods of social exclusion, particularly rumour spreading, "funny looks" and ignoring the person being bullied. This can lead to the young woman being attacked feeling excluded and eventually being isolated and unable to re-integrate herself. If this occurs, she may be more likely to take part in risk taking behaviour, such as attending adult venues or meeting people online.

Boys are more likely to be the victims of **physical bullying**. In order to avoid being called 'gay', boys may try to conform to perceived masculine stereotypes. This strengthens the idea that there is such a thing as 'gay behaviour'.

Whilst many schools are becoming more confident to deal with bullying motivated by other kinds of prejudice, such as racist bullying, few have specific measures in place, or the confidence to deal with, homophobic bullying. Research conducted on behalf of the DCSF found that only 6%[46] of schools surveyed had anti-bullying **policies** that addressed homophobic bullying. Whilst some more recent research suggests this figure may now be around 33%[47] in secondary schools, it remains clear that too few schools make specific mention of bullying of this kind. Additionally recent results from Stonewall's *The School Report* 2007[48] show that 76% of LGB pupils attend schools where there is no explicit mention that homophobic bullying is wrong.

This may in part be due to the fact that homophobic bullying can be difficult to recognise. Many pupils find it extremely **difficult to admit** that they are experiencing homophobic bullying. This can be because they may not want to disclose their sexuality to a member of staff, or because they are not lesbian or gay and/or are embarrassed that they are being bullied in this way.

Some LGB pupils feel that being bullied is inevitable and therefore have no right to report it. Others may not report the bullying as they are concerned about how staff may deal with the problem given the sensitivities involved. As such it cannot be assumed that where no homophobic bullying has been **reported** it is therefore not an issue for that school since, by its nature, homophobic bullying tends to be covert.

"Homophobic language is rife in schools, and nobody seems to do anything about it."
16 year old boy, Birmingham

C3.2 Verbal homophobic bullying

Refer to **DL12** with this section
Homophobic language is a common form of homophobic bullying. It can be casual and is therefore often dismissed as "harmless banter". Schools need to take a consistent approach to tackling any kind of inappropriate language. For more information on overall anti-bullying strategies see DCSF guidance *Safe to Learn.*

Homophobic language and abuse can start in **primary school** where pupils may call each other "gay" or "lesbian" without really understanding what it means. If such usage is not challenged at this stage it can appear acceptable, making it more difficult to address in secondary school. Children may also experience verbal bullying because they have a gay parent.

"They play with a pack of cards, and one card is the gay card. Whoever ends up with the card is the 'gay boy' for the day. These boys are 9 years old".
Primary School Teacher, Sussex

In **secondary school**, homophobic language can be more extensive. Homophobic language can be used:

*   To describe an inanimate object or item that is thought to be inferior or laughable – "that pencil case is so gay"

*   To bully someone who has gay parents or other family members who are gay

*   To suggest that a person is inferior or laughable or in some way not behaving as they should do – "why do you want to play basketball? Are you a gay?"

*   To suggest that an action or response is felt to be inappropriate – "I'm not doing the play if I have to hug him, that's gay"

*   To intimidate someone or make them feel uncomfortable – "Miss, are you a lesbian?"

*   To undermine and bully someone by suggesting that they are gay, including spreading rumours and malicious gossip

*   To verbally bully someone who is gay, or who is thought to be gay.

"Everything is gay. No-one even thinks it is a form of bullying."
14 year old girl, Leicester

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[46] DCSF "Don't Suffer in Silence", 2002 (Douglas et al 1999, sample size 307)

[47] Smith, P.K., Smith, C., Osborn, R. & Samara, M. (in press). A content analysis of school anti-bullying policies: Progress and limitations. Educational Psychology in Practice (2007, sample size 115 primary schools, 27 secondary schools).

[48] Sample, 1,140 (2007)

Pupils may also experience **indirect homophobic abuse**, not directed towards a particular person or group, but used when remarks are made to pass negative judgement, such as 'your bag is so gay' or 'that ring tone is gay'. It is important for all staff to **challenge** pupils, explaining the consequences of using 'gay' in a derogatory way. It might be **time consuming** at first, but a consistent "zero-tolerance" approach to such language is central to achieving progress and an environment in which being gay is not thought of as being inferior.

Direct homophobic abuse is directed towards an individual or group of pupils, as either a one off incident or repeatedly. A boy who is called 'poof' or hears 'backs to the wall' when he walks by, or a girl who is called 'dyke' and avoided as she walks through the school corridor, will suffer both short and long term consequences in terms of the harm caused.

In both contexts, it is essential to challenge homophobic **language**. It is the role of **governors** to ensure heads, teachers and other staff feel supported in doing so.

Cyberbullying
Homophobic bullying increasingly takes place through phone calls, text messaging, picture/video messaging, e-mail, online message boards, online chat rooms and on personal web spaces. Through modern technology vicious comments can be made and rumours spread about a person's sexual orientation.

"They set up a website that had all this stuff on it about me being gay… what I'd done, who I'd been with. I was really scared my parents would see it."
14 year old girl, London

Schools need to ensure that they are alert to the risks of cyberbullying and include provision for it within their anti-bullying policies. See *Safe to Learn.*

C3.3 Physical homophobic bullying

Physical abuse can include hitting, punching or kicking. Young people also report that they experience vandalism and theft of property, being threatened with a weapon, and even death threats.

Homophobic physical abuse can also include sexual abuse. Some gay women report that they have experienced sexual abuse and humiliation from both heterosexual women and from men. Some young people who are lesbian or gay feel under pressure to have sex with someone of the same sex or opposite sex, to "prove" that they really are gay. Some young people are also pressured into having sex with someone of the opposite sex in order to "prove" they are not gay. These pressures are heightened by physical abuse and pressure from peers. Physical abuse might indicate that staff need to take steps to **safeguard** the pupil.

Physical homophobic bullying can affect anyone, regardless of whether or not they are gay, and has to be challenged and **stopped** within a school.

"On Tuesday we went on a geography field trip. One boy thought it would be funny to throw stones and mud at me because I was a filthy gay. I shouted at him to stop, we started fighting. We both got detention but only for the fighting."
13 year old boy, London

Primary school pupils can experience physical homophobic bullying, as well as verbal abuse. This may involve hitting, kicking or punching but can also involve inappropriate touching between pupils. These forms of bullying may be motivated by the fact that a child seems "different" in some way. Teachers and staff may not realise that homophobic bullying is playing a part in the other pupils' responses.

"I was first beaten up for being "different" when I was 8. The teachers thought it was rough and tumble."
16 year old boy, London

In **secondary schools**, homophobic bullying commonly manifests itself in the form of physical abuse. ChildLine[49] has identified that boys are more than twice as likely to report being physically bullied than girls. Physical homophobic bullying can take many forms, both sexual and non-sexual. A boy may be forced to undress in front of other pupils to be laughed at, or may be beaten up. As a result of the embarrassment this kind of bullying causes, many pupils do not report it.

"I was coming out of the toilets when a group of girls started giving me grief for being a lesbian. I told them to leave me alone, and then one punched me in the face. I reported it to the teachers but they didn't sort out the problem completely so I went to the police."
16 year old girl, Leeds

C3.4 Who experiences homophobic bullying?

Anyone can experience homophobic bullying:

*   Young people who are **lesbian, gay or bisexual** (LGB)

*   Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual

*   Young people who are thought to be different in some way, for example, might work hard, or may not be as good at sport, or may have a particular hobby or interest

*   Young people who have **parents**/carers [15.10] or friends or family who are lesbian, gay or bisexual

*   **Teachers and other school staff**, who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Homophobic bullying can also occur when a bully uses **homophobic language** [see A3.2] to describe something, for example: "Those trainers are so gay". In this context, the general hurtful action is delivered in a way that is homophobic.

The wide use of 'gay' to illustrate 'something bad' creates a hostile environment at school where difference and diversity is not respected.

"Homophobic bullying makes me miserable. Nothing else to say really."
14 year old boy, West Midlands

C3.5 Who does the bullying and why?

There is no-one type of person who bullies in this way.

Pupils may justify homophobic bullying because:

*   They think that lesbian and gay people should be bullied, because they believe gay people are "wrong"

*   They do not think there is anything wrong in bullying someone because of their sexual orientation. This may in part be motivated by an incorrect interpretation of what is taught by the faith to which they belong

*   They do not realise that it is bullying

*   They may have low self-esteem, poor communication skills, and were possibly bullied themselves

*   They think they might be lesbian or gay, and this makes them uncomfortable and hostile to others who are

*   They think it is acceptable to bully others who do not conform to their "norm"

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[49] www.ChildLine.org.uk/extra/homophobicbullyingsurvey.asp

- They think **gay parenting** is wrong and pupils should be treated differently because of it.

In addition pupils tend not to intervene in cases of homophobic bullying in case the bully thinks that they might be gay, or they think that it is ok to be gay. This makes the sense of **isolation** more profound for the person being bullied.

For more information on the motivations for bullying and strategies to deal with this, please see *Safe to Learn*.

C4: Prevention

C4.1 Leadership

Refer to **DL29** with this section
Preventing homophobic bullying is a long term strategy to eradicate it from schools. **Responding** to incidents is important, but teachers and school staff have a responsibility to provide on-going information to pupils and parents/carers about homophobic bullying, the **effect** that it has on pupils, and the consequences of bullying. Pupils will be more likely to understand that homophobic bullying is unacceptable if this is visible throughout the ethos of the school. Reiterating the message after an incident will only have a limited impact.

Staff should also feel **protected** [21] from bullying. Preventing homophobic bullying will also therefore have an impact on pupil attitudes to staff, and help prevent future incidents of bullying.

Further information about how to integrate homophobic bullying into wider approaches to bullying can be found in *Safe to Learn*.

C4.2 How to introduce the issue of homophobic bullying

Refer to **DL20** with this section
Heads and the senior leadership team (including those with strategic responsibility for anti-bullying work) will have developed general strategies for preventing homophobic bullying. This will include the school anti-bullying policy which, Departmental guidance suggests, should be re-communicated to all members of staff, parents/carers and pupils at least once a year. Giving students and staff an opportunity to comment on the school's approach

to dealing with homophobic bullying ensures the issue is kept alive and understanding is maintained.

Schools can also use occasions such as national Anti-Bullying Week (November) to facilitate discussion and raise awareness about the topic. Other opportunities for incorporating prevention work are discussed within the following sections.

Some staff members can feel nervous about introducing issues related to homophobic bullying with pupils. It can be helpful in these situations if staff bear in mind the following three points:

That regardless of what a pupil thinks about gay people, no-one deserves to be bullied.

That gay people are entitled to equal rights in the UK, and will be protected from bullying of any sort.

That homophobic bullying is unacceptable in any context, even if it is being used against heterosexual people.

C4.3 How to discuss issues around homophobic language

Refer to **DL12** with this section
Homophobic language is often used without thinking and is often ignored because it is difficult to know how to respond. **Homophobic language** is often dismissed as "harmless banter" and not thought to be particularly hurtful. Homophobic language in schools needs to be challenged because ignoring it allows homophobic bullying in general to continue to escalate.

Homophobic language should be challenged within a general programme of work that the school undertakes to tackle the problem of homophobic bullying, including negative attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people. It is not a singular response to the difficulties that arise. Any action to challenge homophobic language should be taken within the framework of the **school's behaviour policy**.

"They say gay means lame, and it is nothing to do with hating gays. It doesn't make me feel like that though".
14 year old boy, London

Staff should consistently make it clear that homophobic comments are **unacceptable** and ensure that pupils who experience it feel supported. Staff will need to be sensitive when talking to pupils about incidents. They may be gay but not know how to tell someone that, or may be concerned that parents/carers will be involved.

"When we hear homophobic language, we make it clear it is not acceptable: I will not tolerate language like that in my classroom. If they say it's just a bit of banter, I make them write me an essay on why homophobic language is not acceptable in our schools."
Secondary school teacher, Manchester

If a pupil continues to use homophobic language, they need to understand the effect that their language has on other people. This could include asking the pupil to write why homophobic language is unacceptable in school. If the pupil continues to be homophobic, they could be spoken to by a senior manager. A pupil may be given detention, but parents will need to have been informed about this policy and be given 24 hours' prior notice if the detention occurs before or after the school day, or at lunchtime.

If a pupil continues to be bully others, schools may want to consider contacting **parents** or carers to discuss the issue and problem with them and reminding them about the school's anti-bullying policy. Parents/carers also need to understand why homophobic language is unacceptable.

Sharing information with pupils and parents/carers is central to ensuring that they understand why their behaviour is unacceptable. Homophobic language is often used in ignorance, and therefore education is crucial.

For more information on sanctions see Safe to Learn and School Discipline and Pupil Behaviour Policies: Guidance for Schools.

C4.4 Using curriculum opportunities

Refer to **DL6, DL21, DL22, DL23** and **DL24** with this section
Schools should refer to what the guidance on the sexual orientation regulations says about the curriculum. The guidance can be found at: **www.teachernet.gov.uk/sholeschoole/equality/ sexualorientation/regulations2007/**

The key to tackling prejudice-driven bullying is to provide opportunities for pupils to think, understand and challenge their own prejudice.

Through **curriculum** subjects, including English, Geography, History, Art, Music, Drama, PE, Citizenship and PSHE opportunities may be provided to introduce issues around homophobic bullying. More widely General Studies and Religious Education lessons can be used as vehicles for discussing this topic, although they should not be considered the only subjects where it is appropriate to raise issues around bullying and discrimination. In raising issues around religious perspectives it is important to distinguish that bullying behaviour is entirely different from religious belief.

Citizenship and PSHE classes provide an ideal time to talk about **different families** and look at the effects of bullying, as well as to discuss inappropriate language and prejudice.

Teaching about sexual orientation does not mean teaching about sex or sexual activity. Instead, it is about teaching pupils about difference and diversity. Teaching about sexual orientation, and bullying, will prevent homophobic bullying.

C4.5 How to discuss different families

Refer to **DL13** with this section
The concept of what constitutes a family has changed over the years. Increasingly families can include:

- One parent, either a mother or father

- One or two grandparents

- One parent, and the partner of a parent (either same sex or opposite sex)

- Parents who have adopted a child

- Siblings from different families and different ages

- Parents who live with a child and a parent who does not live with the child

- Looked after children, including those in long and short-term care.

It is likely that some children and young people in a primary school and secondary school will either have, or know about, same-sex parenting.

"My partner, my daughter's biological father, and I all have parental responsibility. The school was a bit confused to begin with but I think my daughter explained it all to them!"
Parent of a Primary School Pupil, Birmingham

Children and young people can experience bullying because of their family arrangements, regardless of whether or not a parent is gay. Some pupils report that they experience **homophobic bullying** because they come from a one-parent family, and it is assumed by peers that the parent is gay.

Acknowledging and recognising difference in families, and ensuring that those differences are not seen to be inferior, is key to tackling homophobic bullying.

Preventing homophobic bullying of this sort relies on a broader and more inclusive approach to discussing families and parents. Pupils should understand that different family structures exist.

"All my friends know my mum is a lesbian and she has a girlfriend. I know I'm not the only one in school either, though I'm probably the most open. I've learnt some quick lines if anyone has a go. Most don't these days."
14 year old girl, Lancaster

C4.6 How to support pupils who are lesbian, gay or bisexual

Refer to **DL14, DL15** and **DL26** with this section
Staff should feel comfortable enough to deal with a situation where a pupil "comes out" to them. If pupils receive a supportive reaction from staff, they are more likely to feel able to tell someone about incidents of homophobic bullying. Staff should therefore:

- Listen and be **supportive**

- Discuss how **parents** and carers might respond

- Tell pupils their **confidentiality** will be respected, and explain the circumstances where it may not be possible to do so

- Ask them how they would like to proceed

- Recommend other resources [see further resources], such as local youth groups and websites.

"My teacher told me that we have to all make choices and some choices are bad choices and some choices are good choices. She made it clear that I was about to make a bad choice."
15 year old girl, Cumbria

Staff who respond negatively to pupils who come out, can compound the sense of isolation that a young person may be experiencing. Pupils may be reluctant to tell anyone else, and will not feel able to report incidents of homophobic bullying if this occurs.

C5: Responding

C5.1 Responding to homophobic incidents

Refer to **DL7** with this section
School staff interact with pupils on a daily basis and are more likely to see, and be told about, incidents of homophobic bullying. It is important that staff responses are, in line with Ofsted guidelines, *'swift, proportionate, discreet, influential and effective'.* This section explores ways in which staff can respond effectively to incidents of homophobic bullying, and instil confidence in pupils and parents/carers that issues will be dealt with.

C5.2 Working with policies and procedures

Refer to **DL3** with this section
The first stage in the process of preventing homophobic bullying is to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-bullying measures already in operation and consider how these can be applied to homophobic bullying. It is **Heads** and **governors** who have a duty to ensure that the necessary policies and procedures are in place. These policies should include homophobic bullying and should be developed in consultation with staff, parents/carers and pupils. Therefore all staff should be aware of them.

Responding to incidents of homophobic bullying should be done within the context of a school's own policy, for example, with regards the 'hierarchy of sanctions' which the school has deemed appropriate for responding to inappropriate behaviour. This section of guidance should be read with these policies in mind.

For more information on sanctions and tackling bullying see *Safe to Learn* and *School Discipline and Pupil Behaviour Policies: Guidance for Schools.*

C5.3 How to respond to verbal abuse

Refer to **DL16** and **DL17** with this section
Stopping verbal abuse, particularly the use of homophobic language, is part of the broader, whole school approach to preventing homophobic bullying. If heads develop **"zero-tolerance"** strategies for incidents of homophobic language, this will help staff intervene and take action. Taking steps to ensure respect for people regardless of their sexual orientation will enable pupils to be more open about their experiences of bullying.

It is important to create a **secure time and space** where pupils can report incidents. It is essential that when a young person is reporting an incident or incidents, the member of staff does not assume the pupil is either gay or heterosexual. Staff members should listen carefully to the young person's experience, and work with them to identify appropriate responses. The **school's anti-bullying policy** and **'hierarchy of sanctions'** should form the basis of the response.

If a pupil knows that staff will respond to verbal bullying with sensitivity, they may feel more comfortable about discussing other issues (including issues relating to sexual orientation).

When dealing with homophobic verbal abuse in primary schools staff need to take account of the fact the motivations for using such language are likely to be different and should therefore respond accordingly.

"We hear "gay" as a term of abuse every single day. The children may not know exactly what it means, but they know they are using it as an insult. That's why we need to tackle it at this stage."
Primary School Head Teacher, North East

C5.4 How to respond to physical abuse

Refer to **DL18** with this section
Like **verbal abuse**, pupils may be reluctant to **report** incidents because they fear that staff will assume they are gay. Physical abuse can indicate a young person is at risk, and the overarching strategies that are implemented to safeguard pupils might be appropriate in this context, for example working with other **agencies**, including (if necessary) the police. Homophobic violence can be a crime. Anti-bullying policies should be rigorously enforced in order to keep pupils **safe** from physical abuse.

Teachers and other staff members should refer to the **anti-bullying policy** and the **'hierarchy of sanctions'** when responding to homophobic bullying. In particularly severe circumstances the school should consider permanent exclusion.

The Department's guidance on exclusions 2006 states:

"A decision to exclude a pupil should be taken only:
a) in response to serious breaches of the schools behaviour policy; and
b) if allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school."

Only the head or teacher in charge of a Pupil Referral Unit (or, in the absence of the head or teacher in charge, the most senior teacher who is acting in that role) can exclude a pupil.

The guidance further states:

"In cases where a head has permanently excluded a pupil for: … persistent and defiant misbehaviour, including bullying (which would include racist or homophobic bullying), or repeated possession and/ or use of an illegal drug on school premises, the Secretary of State would not normally expect the governing body or an Independent Appeal Panel to reinstate the pupil." [50]

Note this guidance is due to be updated Summer 2007 when the wording may change slightly.

C5.5 Holding people who bully to account

Refer to **DL9** and **DL25** with this section
If pupils have not previously been taught that homophobic bullying is wrong, it may take time to make pupils understand that their behaviour is inappropriate. Although schools can develop and implement immediate **responses** to homophobic bullying incidents, schools may also want to develop a longer term strategy to help change attitudes.

This work is achieved by making use of **curriculum** opportunities, working in partnership with pupils to develop **policies**, and ensuring that pupils understand what **sanctions** will be applied if they fail to follow the rules. Discussions and ideas about sexual orientation should not be shut down. Examining sexual orientation in a positive, constructive way, rather than just as a response to bullying, helps tackle discrimination and prejudice, and thus helps prevent homophobic bullying in the future.

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[50] Source: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/exclusion/guidance/part1/

Some pupils may be reluctant to stop bullying because they think their stance is justified. This position can sometimes be supported by **parents/carers**. Schools need to be very clear that homophobic bullying is not tolerated under any circumstances and that **sanctions** and consequences apply.

C5.6 Supporting those harmed by bullying

Refer to **DL8, DL26, DL14** and **DL15** with this section One of the greatest barriers to addressing homophobic bullying is under-reporting. Pupils may feel reluctant to report incidents because they think that the staff member will assume that they are gay, or that they will respond negatively. In order to **safeguard** all pupils, children and young people need to feel confident that the school will be able to **support** them effectively.

Homophobic bullying is distinct from other forms of bullying since additional barriers exist to admitting it is occurring. If a pupil is experiencing racist bullying, they may feel able to discuss this with their **parents or carers**. Whilst it is desirable for a pupil who is experiencing homophobic bullying to confide in their parents/carers, evidence suggests that 75% of young people feel that they are unable to do so as they may be worried that parents or carers will either find out that they are gay, or assume that they are, even if this is not the case (Source: Stonewall's The School Report).

"I'm not gay, but always been rubbish at sports at stuff. My dad already thinks I'm lame. If he found out the other boys call me a poof, it would just prove him right I reckon."
14 year old boy, Cardiff

Schools need to develop robust **confidentiality** policies that pupils understand and be able to offer help to pupils who are unable to access support at home. In terms of confidentiality, it is important to bear in mind that "coming out" or a disclosure about consensual sexual activity, is not in itself a reason to breach confidentiality. However, an admission of behaviour, which places the young person, or other young people at risk of significant harm, regardless of their sexuality, may constitute a need to breach confidence. School confidentiality policies should be in line with local child protection protocols which reflect the principles of Working Together (2006).

A pupil who has experienced homophobic bullying needs to have the opportunity to state what has happened, and have an opportunity to express how they feel (in writing if they prefer). If they want to, a parent, carer or other adult or friend can support them.

Pupils need to understand what is going to happen as a result of them telling a member of staff. Staff will want to consider if they should also use the opportunity to provide further pastoral care, especially if the pupil is **gay** and wants to talk about it.

Pupils may also be reluctant to use pupil support systems for example, peer mentoring systems. All those involved in anti-bullying work need to understand the sensitivities around homophobic bullying.

It is important to involve pupils in developing the policies in place relating to homophobic bullying to improve young people's confidence that the school will deal with the bullying, and to demonstrate to all pupils that bullying of this nature will not be tolerated.

C5.7 Working with parents whose child has experienced bullying

Refer to **DL10** with this section **DL10**
No **parent or carer** wants their child to be bullied. Any young person, whether they are gay or not, can experience homophobic bullying. It can affect

children and young people at primary school or secondary school. Young people however, often do not tell their parents/carers about homophobic bullying, because they do not want their parents/carers to think, or know, that they are gay. Parents, carers and families may not even know this is happening.

It is advisable that schools work with parents/carers to help prevent homophobic bullying. By working in partnership, parents/carers will be more aware of the issues around homophobic bullying, and are more likely to tell the school if they think their child is experiencing it. Communicating and consulting with parents/carers about this issue will also help challenge any **resistance** to the subject.

Parents/carers, like pupils, may think that homophobic bullying is acceptable. Schools will want to consider explaining to parents/carers what homophobic bullying is, and what strategies there are in place to prevent it and respond to it.

Some parents/carers may assume that if a school is preventing homophobic bullying, they are therefore discussing gay sex, or encouraging pupils to be gay. This is not the case, and this needs to be made clear to parents/carers. Schools should consider using vehicles such as the prospectus to emphasise that **anti-bullying policies** include homophobic bullying. Letters home about bullying should ideally make reference to homophobic bullying.

For more on working with parents and carers see **"How to respond to verbal incidents"**.

C5.8 Multi-agency working and safeguarding

Schools have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people from harm, including bullying. This means that on occasion, schools may want to engage with other **agencies** in order to protect children and young people from bullying. See *Safe to Learn* for more information. Staff will also want to be aware that some voluntary organisations can offer support to children or young people experiencing homophobic bullying. **Please see the Further Resources section for more information.**

C6: Monitoring

C6.1 Monitoring and evaluation

Refer to **DL3** and **DL4** with this section
Most schools have mechanisms for recording
incidents of bullying, and in particular, racist bullying.
Monitoring incidents of bullying enables a school
to identify patterns of behaviour and the extent of
bullying, and then take **pro-active** steps to challenge
it. The DCSF therefore recommends as best practice
that schools record all incidents of bullying, including
homophobic bullying. Schools that use monitoring
processes are able to modify their bullying **policies**
to respond to specific trends and issues.
Incorporating incidents of homophobic bullying into
these existing systems is an invaluable means of
raising awareness about the issue amongst all staff.

As part of the ongoing process of monitoring and
evaluation schools should celebrate the successes
which they make, and which their pupils make,
through tutorial time, prize giving, letters to parents/
carers and the local press.

For more information on data collection see *Safe
to Learn*.

Frequently asked questions

1. Sexuality is a private matter. Why is it relevant to school?

2. Some parents do not want us to respond to homophobic bullying. What do we do?

3. We have to respect cultural and religious difference. Does this mean pupils can be homophobic?

4. Primary school pupils are too young to understand. Surely we should not mention gay people or homophobic bullying?

5. What about transgender people?

6. Is it ok to tell gay pupils to be more discreet to avoid bullying?

7. I'm a gay teacher and pupils talk to me about my sexual orientation. What can I say and not say?

8. I think a pupil may be gay. What should I do?

9. We do not have any gay pupils at this school. Why would this be relevant?

10. How do schools with a religious character respond to homophobic bullying?

11. Everything is "gay" these days. Do I have to challenge every word?

12. How should I treat the non-biological parent of a pupil?

13. How do I respond to homophobic bullying in PSHE?

14. What about section 28?

15. What about homophobic bullying outside school?

16. Our child is about to start primary school. Should we tell his teacher that we are a same-sex couple?

17. I have pupils in my school whose faith gives them problematic attitudes to homophobic bullying. Do I treat them differently?

1. Sexuality is a private matter. Why is it relevant to school?

There is no obligation for any person to disclose their sexual orientation. However **homophobic bullying** is something which schools have a **statutory** obligation to address. Addressing homophobic bullying does not mean discussing sex. It means taking decisive and assertive action to prevent bullying.

It is important to remember that homophobic bullying does not just affect lesbian, gay or bisexual people, or those perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. It can also be targeted towards those who are seen to be "different" in some other way, for example, because they do not wear the "right" sort of clothes.

2. Some parents/carers do not want us to respond to homophobic bullying. What do we do?

No **parent/carer** wants their child to be bullied. Nor do they want to hear that their child is a bully. Regardless of their views on gay people, or sexual orientation, parents and carers have to understand that schools have a responsibility to keep pupils safe. **Preventing** and **responding** to homophobic bullying is essential if schools are going to fulfil their **responsibilities**. It is important to **consult** parents/carer about any steps to prevent homophobic bullying. Parents/carers also need to **understand** that homophobic bullying can affect anyone, regardless of whether or not they are gay.

3. We have to respect cultural and religious difference. Does this mean pupils can be homophobic?

Some religions or cultures believe that homosexuality is wrong and lesbian and gay people are not entitled to the same rights as heterosexual people. However, **no religion** or culture believes that bullying, including homophobic bullying, is ever acceptable. There can therefore be no justification for homophobic bullying.

All young people can experience homophobic bullying, regardless of their sexual orientation, religion, or views, and they deserve to be protected. Tolerance and kindness should be integral to any school. A person can hold whatever views they want, but expressing views that denigrate others is unacceptable.

4. Primary school pupils are too young to understand. Surely we should not mention gay people?

Primary school pupils may be too young to understand their own sexual orientation but it is likely that some primary school pupils will know someone who is gay. This might be a member of their family, godparents, or family friends. Homophobic language is used in primary schools without the pupils necessarily realising what it is that they are saying. Primary schools should respond to homophobic bullying in an age-appropriate way, whilst demonstrating that it is not acceptable in school. The same strategies can be used to tackle all forms of inappropriate language.

5.   What about transgender people?

Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different things. Gender identity describes a person's gender. Sexual orientation describes whether a person is heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual. The description of someone as transgender refers to their gender identity.

Some young people come to realise that their biological gender is not the same as the gender with which they identify, that is, they are born a girl but feel like a boy, or a born a boy and feel like a girl. Some Trans young people can be heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual, but like all pupils can experience homophobic bullying and should be protected from it.

Trans pupils may not conform to accepted gender norms and roles and therefore may experience homophobic bullying as a result. It is therefore important to be alert to the unique sort of bullying they may experience and protect them accordingly.

6.   Is it ok to tell gay pupils to be more discreet to avoid bullying?

No. The fundamental principle of *Every Child Matters* is that children and young people should be able to grow up and discover their identities. Telling a pupil to be more discreet undermines that identity, and suggests that the young person is responsible for the bullying they are experiencing. It is important to **respond to the bullying**, rather than removing the target. For secondary age pupils schools may wish to encourage the young person to attend a local **youth group** if they are gay, or find friends and activities where they are able to be themselves.

It is important to work with children and young people who are being bullied to offer them the **support** they need and to equip them with the skills to assess their own safety. For more information on strategies to tackle bullying, including Restorative Justice and conflict resolution see *Safe to Learn*.

See also:
DL9 Working with pupils who bully
DL14 How to support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils
DL26 Supporting those harmed by bullying

7.   I'm a gay teacher and pupils talk to me about my sexual orientation. What can I say and not say?

School culture and ethos determines how open staff are about their **private lives**, and you should therefore seek advice and guidance from your head. The key is consistency between all staff regardless of sexual orientation. See section 5 and guidance written by the General Teaching Council *The Statement of Professional Values and Practice for Teachers* [5.3] for more information.

Pupils, especially **gay pupils**, can benefit from knowing positive lesbian and gay role models. Staff should however, remain professional and ensure that they provide advice and guidance in a way that is appropriate.

8.   I think a pupil may be gay. What should I do?

It is important that you do not ask pupils about their sexual orientation, or assume that they are necessarily troubled by it. If a person does come out to you, it is important to be **supportive**. That way, they will be more likely to tell you if they are experiencing bullying.

Creating a **school ethos** where all pupils feel respected is central to giving pupils the confidence to talk to staff if they need to. Use group discussion and **classes** to reiterate the school's anti-homophobic bullying **policy** and in secondary schools ensure appropriate information about local groups and useful websites is made available in an appropriate place (and in line with school policy), and reiterate the school's commitment to inclusivity.

9. We do not have any gay pupils at this school. Why would this be relevant?

Homophobic bullying can affect **anyone** regardless of sexual orientation. Anyone who is thought to be gay, or just thought to be "different" can be called "gay" or experience homophobic abuse. It is highly likely that your school will have gay pupils, even if they have not yet "come out". Even if you do not have any gay pupils, it is likely that pupils may have gay friends or **family** and therefore it is relevant to them. Finally, there are gay people in the world (and in the **workplace**) and therefore tackling homophobic bullying is essential to a pupil's wider education.

10. How do schools with a religious character respond to homophobic bullying?

Along with all schools, schools with a religious character condemn and will not tolerate any form of bullying, including homophobic bullying, for at the heart of a successful school is the respect for the dignity of the individual and bullying can have no place in such communities.

See also:
DL11 Schools with a religious character and homophobic bullying

11. Everything is "gay" these days. Do I have to challenge every word?

Homophobic language is common and its use is often casual, but it is very difficult to respond to more serious forms of homophobic bullying if certain words and usage are allowed. Homophobic language also contributes to a culture of intolerance, and may have an impact on how young people feel about themselves. It is therefore necessary to have a **"zero-tolerance"** approach to homophobic language, regardless of how it is used. Staff should make it clear that homophobic language is not tolerated by the school and that a **'hierarchy of sanctions'** will be followed if it continues.

12. How should I treat the non-biological parent of a pupil?

Like any other **parent**. Non-biological parents have the same rights and responsibilities as a step parent. It is important that schools treat non-biological parents in the same way as biological parents, and they feel able to be involved in school life and activities. Some non-biological parents may apply to adopt a child. Some others may apply for a parental responsibility order; this enables them to sign official forms from school for example.

13. How do I respond to homophobic bullying in PSHE?

Providing an opportunity for pupils to **talk** about sexual orientation and their views of lesbian and gay people is a good thing. You may not always like what they say but if the issue is up for discussion, it is not going to be ignored. There is, however, a crucial difference between expressing views about lesbian and gay issues (which may not be positive) and expressing hatred (homophobic bullying). Before the **lesson** begins, reiterate the importance of respecting other people's views and circumstances. Pupils should be able to present their viewpoints in a way that respects others. If a pupil expresses views which cause particular concern, consider whether it is necessary to speak to them after class and provide additional **support**.

14. What about section 28?

Section 28 was an often misinterpreted piece of legislation that prompted some schools to think they could not tackle homophobic bullying. Section 28 has now been **abolished**. This means that schools can and should respond to homophobic bullying without worrying about Section 28.

15. What about homophobic bullying outside school?

A school is not legally responsible for bullying that takes place outside school, but can take steps to tackle any bullying inside school, and be responsive to incidents that happen outside school.

Under the Education and Inspection Act 2006 a school's behaviour policy can include, as far as is reasonable, measures to regulate behaviour outside school premises when pupils are not in the charge or control of members of staff (which is particularly pertinent to cyberbullying). See section 3.4 of School Discipline and Pupil Behaviour Policies: Guidance for Schools for more detail.

16. Our child is about to start primary school. Should we tell his teacher that we are a same-sex couple?

You do not have to tell the school that you are a same-sex couple, but telling them will enable them to ensure that your child is included and supported. Telling the school will also enable them to keep an eye on your child, and intervene swiftly and effectively if there is any homophobic bullying. Schools' primary concern is the children in their care, not their views on their family arrangements.

17. I have pupils in my school who believe their faith condones homophobic bullying. Do I treat them differently?

All faiths fully support the declaration that all forms of bullying are wrong. No pupil has the right to bully another and it is likely that such an assumption is based on a misunderstanding of religious teachings.

As well as working with the bully to acknowledge the harm that they have done it is important to look for wider opportunities to discuss attitudes around difference and respect, for example within the curriculum or tutor group sessions. Demonstrating a whole-school ethos based on celebrating difference is also critical. Where the bullying is persistent it may also be appropriate to contact the child's parents or carers to alert them to the situation and to remind them about the school's policies on bullying.

Further resources

The DCSF does not necessarily endorse all the views expressed by these organisations.

The following sites have been recommended by EACH and Stonewall.

See also *Safe to Learn* for a comprehensive list of anti-bullying organisations

Resources for young people

Educational Action Challenging Homophobia (EACH) Helpline
National Helpline for young people experiencing homophobic bullying.
0808 1000 143
Mon to Fri 10am–5pm
Saturday 10am–Midday

ChildLine
ChildLine is a free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK.
National Helpline: 0800 1111
www.childline.org

Coastkid
A website developed by Brighton and Hove City Council to explore the various aspects of bullying, including homophobic bullying.
www.coastkid.org

Channel 4 LGB Teens
Channel 4 has developed a microsite for young lesbian, gay and bisexual people. It provides information about coming out, staying safe, and how to respond to bullying.
www.channel4.com/health/microsites/L/lgb_teens/index.html

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard (LLGS)
LLGS provides an information, support and referral service throughout the UK. You can find out about your local LGBT youth group here.
PO Box 7324, London N1 9QS
National Helpline: 020 7837 7324
Fax: 020 7837 7300
www.llgs.org.uk
email: admin@llgs.org.uk

Finding a youth group
Try "Google", your Local Authority, or visit Stonewall's website where there are listings of resources for young people.
www.stonewall.org.uk/educationforall

Voluntary organisations

Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA)
Hosted and supported by National Children's Bureau (NCB), the ABA was founded by NSPCC and NCB in 2002. The Alliance brings together 68 organisations into one network with the aim of reducing bullying and creating safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn.
National Children's Bureau
8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
email: aba@ncb.org.uk

Educational Action Challenging Homophobia (EACH)
EACH is the charity providing UK-wide helpline support to young people experiencing homophobic bullying and award-winning training to challenge homophobia in schools for Local Authorities and Children's Services.
14 Clifton Down Road
Bristol BS8 4BF
National Helpline: 0808 1000 143
Mon to Fri 10am–5pm
Saturday 10am–Midday
Helpline Officer: 0117 946 7607
www.eachaction.org.uk
email: info@eachaction.org.uk

In association with Bristol City Council EACH have prepared the following guidance specifically on the repeal of Section 28:
www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/services/pdf/
Out_of_Shadow.pdf

Imaan
A social support group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Muslims, their family, friends and supporters, and those questioning their sexuality or gender identity.
www.imaan.org.uk

Jewish Gay and Lesbian Group
Provides an atmosphere of friendship and support for Jewish gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and their partners.
www.jglg.org.uk

Lesbian & Gay Christian Movement
A UK based international charity working and praying for an inclusive Church.
www.lgcm.org.uk

LGBT Consortium
LGBT Consortium is an umbrella membership body that provides a range of 2nd tier and 3rd tier support to LGBT voluntary organisations and groups, both in London and nationally. Work includes "Freestyle London" which facilitates capacity building with LGBT youth projects/services for the benefit of young LGBT people (London LGBT Youth Council); and a Parenting project that supports parents of LGBT people in London.
Unit J414, Tower Bridge Business Complex
100 Clements Road
London SE16 4DG
020 7064 8383
www.lgbtconsortium.org.uk
email: admin@lbgtconsortium.org.uk

LGBT History Month
February is LGBT History month where organisations, including schools, explore issues relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their history. The website has resources for schools.
www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk

Naz Project London (NPL)
NPL provides support services to South Asians, Muslims, Horn of Africans, Portuguese speakers, and Spanish speakers, including parents and carers of gay people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
Palingswick House, 241 King Street
London W6 9LP
020 8741 1879
www.naz.org.uk
email: npl@naz.org.uk

PACE

PACE promotes the mental health and emotional wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. It also leads the National Family Forum.
34 Hartham Road, London N7 9LJ
0207 700 1323
Fax: 0207 609 4909
www.pacehealth.org.uk
email: general@pace.dircon.co.uk

Queery

A national search engine for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities, Queery provides information on local LGBT youth groups and other local events
www.queery.org.uk

Safra project

The Safra Project is a resource project working on issues relating to lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender women who identify as Muslim religiously and/or culturally.
www.safraproject.org

Schools Out

Schools Out provides both a formal and informal support network for all people who want to raise the issue of homophobia in education.
BM Schools Out! National
London WC1N 3XX
Helpline (Male): 01582 451 424
Helpline (Female): 0207 635 0476
www.schools-out.org.uk
email: secretary@schools-out.org.uk

Stonewall

Stonewall is a charity that works for lesbian, gay and bisexual rights. It also runs the Education for All campaign. The aim of the campaign is to ensure that all young lesbian, gay and bisexual people can fulfil their potential, and that the UK's schools and education systems can deal appropriately with homophobia and homophobic bullying. Stonewall have produced a DVD with the Greater London Authority (Spell it Out), hold an annual conference for educational practitioners, and a youth conference.

Tower Building
York Road, London SE1 7NX
020 75931850
www.stonewall.org.uk
email: info@stonewall.org.uk
Please also visit Stonewall's site for the results of their 2007 survey into homophobic bullying, The School Report.

Terrence Higgins Trust (THT)

THT provides information and resources on HIV & AIDS, as well as information about challenging homophobia. They are increasingly providing youth groups around the country, and are able to visit schools and make presentations.
314-320 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8DP
020 7812 1600
www.tht.org.uk
email: info@tht.org.uk

YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association)

YWCA England & Wales is the leading charity working with young women facing poverty, discrimination or abuse. YWCA produced a report – Pride Not Prejudice – which gives an overview of the issues faced by young women who are lesbian, bisexual or who may be questioning their sexuality.
Clarendon House, 52 Cornmarket Street
Oxford OX1 3EJ
01865 304 200
www.ywca.org.uk
email: info@ywca.org.uk

Support for parents and carers

Pink Parents
Pink Parents works for lesbian, gay and bisexual parents and their children, providing information, resources, advice and access to local groups.
The D'Arcy Lainey Foundation
PO BOX 417
Oldham OL2 7WT
National Helpline: 08701 273 274
Mon to Fri 9am–12pm (excluding public holidays)
Office: 0161 633 2037
Mon to Fri 9.30am–2pm (excluding public holidays)
www.pinkparents.org.uk

Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (FFLAG)
FFLAG is dedicated to supporting parents and their gay, lesbian and bisexual sons and daughters.
7 York Court, Wilder Street
Bristol BS2 8HQ
National Helpline: 0845 652 0311
Office: 0117 9429311
www.fflag.org.uk
email: info@fflag.org.uk

Trade Unions and professional bodies

Association of School and College Leaders
ASCL, is the professional association for leaders of secondary schools and colleges.
ASCL Headquarters, 130 Regent Road
Leicester LE1 7PG
0116 299 1122
www.ascl.org.uk
email: info@ascl.org.uk

Association of Teachers and Lecturers
ATL helps members, as their careers develop, through research, advice, information and legal support.
7 Northumberland Street
London WC2N 5RD
020 7930 6441
www.askatl.org.uk
info@atl.org.uk

National Association of Heads (NAHT)
NAHT provides dedicated support to its member on educational issues.
1 Heath Square, Boltro Road
Haywards Heath RH16 1BL
01444 472 472
www.naht.org.uk
email: info@naht.org.uk

National Governors Association
Aims to improve the educational welfare of children by promoting high standards in schools, and raising the effectiveness of governing bodies.
National Governors' Association
2nd Floor SBQ1, 29 Smallbrook Queensway
Birmingham B5 4HG
0121 643 5787
www.nasg.org.uk
email: governorhq@nga.org.uk

Professional Association of Teachers
PAT is an independent trade union and professional association for teachers, heads, lecturers, education support staff (Professionals Allied to Teaching (PAtT) and, in the Professional Association of Nursery Nurses (PANN), nursery nurses, nannies and other childcarers.
01332 372337
www.pat.org.uk
hq@pat.org.uk

**National Association of Schoolmasters
Union of Women Teachers**
NASUWT is committed to achieving equality for
all teachers, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and
transgender teachers, in both employment and
civil spheres and to actively opposing all forms of
harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination.
The Union has a national advisory committee for
lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teachers which
informs the work of the union and holds an annual
consultation conference for LGBT members to debate
and discuss issues of importance to them and to
NASUWT. In addition, the union provides specialist
guidance on legislation, key issues such as
homophobic bullying and provides training for
LGBT activists.
Hillscourt Education Centre, Rose Hill
Birmingham B45 8RS
0121 453 6150
www.teachersunion.org.uk
email: nasuwt@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

National Union of Teachers (NUT)
NUT provides guidance for teachers on responding to
and preventing homophobic bullying and runs an
annual conference for LGBT teachers.
Hamilton House, Mabledon Place
London WC1H 9BD
0207 388 6191
www.nut.org.uk

Trades Union Congress (TUC)
TUC campaigns for equal rights for lesbian, gay,
bisexual and transgender people at work and
in society.
Congress House, Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LS
020 7636 4030
www.tuc.org.uk

UNISON
The public services trade union, representing non-
teaching staff in schools, UNISON promotes lesbian,
gay, bisexual and transgender equality within the
union, at work and in society.
1 Mabledon Place
London WC1H 9AJ
0845 355 0845
Minicom: 0800 0 967 968
www.unison.org.uk/out

Additional support for staff

General Teaching Council for England (GTCE)
GTCE hosted a major online discussion forum
investigating teachers' views on challenging
homophobia and ensuring sexual orientation
equality in schools. This forum brought teachers
together to share their views and practices in relation
to challenging homophobia in schools.
Whittington House, 19-30 Alfred Place
London WC1E 7EA
National Helpline: 0870 001 0308
www.gtce.org.uk
email: info@gtce.org.uk

Teacher Support Network
Teacher Support Network provides professional
and personal support to teachers and lecturers
in England.
Hamilton House, Mabledon Place
London WC1H 9BE
0207 554 5200
www.teachersupport.info
email: enquiries@teachersupport.info

Faith groups with education interests

Agency for Jewish Education
Bet Meir, 44a Albert Road
London NW4 2SJ
020 83490839

Association of Muslim Schools
Unit B5A, 77 Evington Valley Road
Leicester LE5 5LL
0845 2706476

Board of Deputies of British Jews
6 Bloomsbury Square
London WC1A 2LP
020 7543 5400

Catholic Education Service
39 Eccleston Square
London SW1V 1BX
0207 901 4880
email: general@cesew.org.uk

Church of England Education Division
Church House, Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3AZ

Churches Together in England
27 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HH
0207 529 8140

Council of Oriental Orthodox Churches
34 Chertsey Road, Church Square
Shepperton TW17 9LF

Free Church
11 Tabors Avenue
Chelmsford CM2 7ES
01245 471127

Hindu Council UK
Vivekananda Centre, 6 Lea Gardens
Wembley HA9 7SE
020 8902 0840

The Methodist Church
66, Balfour Road
London W13 9TW
020 8579 7719

Muslim Council of Britain
PO Box 57330
London E1 2WJ
0845 2626786
email: admin@mcb.org.uk

The National Society for Promoting Religious Education
Church House, Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3AZ
020 7898 1501
www.natsoc.org.uk
email: info@natsoc.org.uk

The Network of Sikh Organisations
43 Dorset Road
London SW19 3EZ
0208 540 4148

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
Stanborough Park
Watford WD2 6JP
01923 251309

Downloads (DLs)

DL1: What does homophobic bullying look like?

Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

Who experiences homophobic bullying?
- Young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual.

- Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

- Young people who are different in some way – they may not act like the other boys or girls.

- Young people who have gay friends, or family, or their parents are gay.

- Teachers and school staff, who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Who does the bullying and why?
- Anyone. Especially if they have not been told it's wrong.

- People who think that lesbian and gay people should be bullied, because they believe gay people are "wrong".

- People who might be gay themselves, and are angry about that.

- People who think "boys should act like boys" and "girls should act like girls".

- People who think gay people shouldn't have the same rights as heterosexual people.

- People who may have been bullied themselves or have low self-esteem and poor communication skills.

- They think gay parenting is wrong and pupils should be treated differently because of it.

What does homophobic bullying look like?
- Verbal abuse – including spreading rumours that someone is gay, suggesting that something or someone is inferior and so they are "gay" – for example, "you're such a gay boy!" or "those trainers are so gay!"

- Physical abuse – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault, and threatening behaviour.

- Cyberbullying – using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. Can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

Can it happen in Primary schools?
- Yes. Pupils may not know what the words mean, but can use homophobic language against others as a form of bullying.

- Or, they may bully a pupil who has gay parents or family members.

Do we have to do anything specific to tackle it?
- You can do, but you can also use your existing methods for tackling bullying and make sure homophobic bullying is included.

- If a young person is not explicitly told that homophobic bullying is wrong, they may think that it is ok to bully someone in this way. Saying clearly that homophobic bullying is wrong makes a difference to pupils' experience. In Stonewall's School Report, 73% of the young people who responded were bullied in schools that made no reference to homophobic bullying. Where schools did make reference to homophobic bullying, 53% of pupils experienced bullying.

DL2: The role of governors in preventing homophobic bullying

Governors must ensure that policies designed to promote good behaviour and discipline are pursued at school. Governors must make and review a statement of principles to which the head teacher is to have regard in determining measures to regulate behaviour. These measures include those to be taken with a view to preventing and responding to all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying. This is a requirement of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Governors must support and advise head teachers about how best to go about this. They should consider:

- **Their leadership role in a school.** Governors have a responsibility to set the ethos of a school, and play a key role in setting the agenda for an effective good behaviour policy. Governors can provide crucial leadership in preventing homophobic bullying. Strong messages from the top about the importance of tackling all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying, are vital.

- **Development of policies, practices and procedures.** Governors should consider how an inclusive anti-bullying policy will include homophobic bullying. They should also think about how this inclusion can be applied to all other related polices, practices and procedures.

- **Consultation.** Governors should consult all staff, pupils and parents and families about this work. This will enable them to raise concerns and will help all members of the school community work together.

- **The support and development of staff.** Staff will need support if they are to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying. They will need professional development and training in this area to ensure they can intervene effectively and with confidence. They will also need to know that they have the backing of the governors in this work. Governors should also be aware that staff are protected in law from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. This means that recruitment processes should be fair and staff should be protected from homophobic bullying. This law applies to all schools, including faith schools.

- **Celebrating achievements.** Governors are advised to take the lead in celebrating achievements. Preventing homophobic bullying takes time and everyone should be kept informed about progress. The DCSF recommends as best practice that parents and families be told about successes in this work. Local authorities and other agencies (including Ofsted) also need to be kept informed about successes.

- **Multi-agency work.** Governors will monitor the other agencies schools work with in order to keep pupils safe. This includes youth justice, children's social care, education and health. Governors might want to recommend other agencies to help schools prevent homophobic bullying.

Governors have a unique and invaluable role to play in protecting children and young people by providing the necessary leadership and impetus to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying.

DL3: School evaluation form for governors preventing and responding to homophobic bullying

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Acknowledging homophobic bullying. Governors set the ethos of the school. They should alert the head teacher to the issue of homophobic bullying and make recommendations about how to include it in bullying strategies.	• Governors discuss and understand that homophobic bullying is a prolific form of bullying. • Governors recognise that they have a legal responsibility to protect pupils from homophobic bullying. • Governors make recommendations to the head teacher that homophobic bullying should be included in the statement of principles.	
Developing policies Governors should ensure that homophobic bullying is included in anti-bullying policies and related policies and procedures.	• Homophobic bullying is included in the anti-bullying policy. • Governors have examined other policies, practices and procedures to see where strategies to prevent homophobic bullying could be introduced.	
Promoting an ethos Governors have a leadership role in the school. They should demonstrate to other members of the community that homophobic bullying is important and respect for others regardless of sexual orientation is integral to school culture.	• Governors explicitly support the head teacher in taking steps to prevent homophobic bullying. • People from all backgrounds can make a valuable contribution as school governors. This includes	

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Promoting an ethos … continued	lesbian and gay people. All those responsible for appointing governors should do so on the basis of their ability to be effective governors irrespective of their background. • Governors ensure that age-appropriate messages are sent to current and prospective pupils and parents via prospectus, letters home, policies and agreements.	
Addressing staff needs Staff need to know that governors, and the management team at a school will be supportive if they intervene in incidents of homophobic bullying. They also need to know that they will be protected from homophobic bullying, and feel that they have the necessary skills to support young people.	• Staff know that they will be supported if they take action to respond to and prevent homophobic bullying. • Steps are taken to ensure staff are recruited fairly. • Staff understand that they will be supported if they experience homophobic bullying. • Training programmes have been developed for staff.	
Consultation Governors have a responsibility to ensure that all staff (including unpaid staff), pupils, parents and families are aware of any changes in policies. Effective consultation will help when any changes come into effect.	• The school has developed a system for anonymous and confidential feedback from parents. • Governors engage and involve student councils in the work, and have developed other mechanisms for all pupils to feed in to proposals. • Governors are able to explain to parents why they are doing this work.	

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Assessing the extent of homophobic bullying Understanding the nature and extent of a problem will help shape mechanisms for preventing and responding to homophobic bullying.	• Anonymous staff and student feedback forms include questions on homophobic bullying. • Existing mechanisms (such as bullying boxes) include provisions for homophobic bullying.	
Recording incidents Mechanisms exist to record bullying incidents, and categorise them depending on the nature of the incident. These systems should include homophobic bullying.	• Governors have evaluated how other methods of data collection (such as incident logs) can be extended to include homophobic bullying. • Governors have explored other ways of collecting data if existing mechanisms are not appropriate.	
Conducting audits Systematically reviewing every policy, practice and procedure (including curriculum) and evaluating whether steps can be taken to prevent homophobic bullying and raise awareness about it.	• Governors have encouraged the head teacher to identify age-appropriate opportunities in the curriculum to discuss homophobic bullying. • Head teachers have identified other opportunities such as tutor group time.	
Evaluation of data Evaluating the data received from anonymous surveys, existing bullying reporting methods, and recording systems will help the school have a better idea about the nature and extent of homophobic bullying.	• Governors and head teachers have examined data and established when and in what context homophobic bullying occurs. • Governors have identified which groups experience bullying and when certain groups are particularly affected.	

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Evaluation of data ...continued	• Governors and the head teacher have identified next steps.	
Celebrating achievements Preventing homophobic bullying takes time but acknowledging progress helps those involved, stay involved.	• Governors have informed parents and families about the results of audits, and indicated next steps. • Governors and head teachers have informed local authorities about successful strategies. • Members of the community, such as the local police, have been invited to be involved in the work programme.	
Managing complaints and compliments Complaints provide invaluable information about the nature of homophobic bullying in schools, and give further information about where things are going wrong. Governors have a responsibility to hear and judge any complaints, including those that relate to decisions about exclusion. This will form part of the school's required overall complaints procedure.	• Parents, families, pupils and staff feel able to make complaints about homophobic bullying. • The chair of governors has ensured that all governors are able to hear cases fairly and without prejudice.	

DL4: Raising awareness about homophobic bullying in the school community

Have you collected data about homophobic bullying via surveys and informal methods?	**No** →	Collect data. This will define the strategies to be developed and then help monitor and evaluate them.

↓ **Yes**

Does the data indicate that homophobic bullying exists in school?	**No** →	Are you using the right systems for collecting data? Have you asked pupils about their experiences?

↓ **Yes**

Have you shared your findings with the **governors**? Do they understand the impact of homophobic bullying on a school?	**No** →	The governors are important allies and have a statutory responsibility to implement anti-bullying policies. Governors need to understand the impact of homophobic bullying so they can help develop inclusive policies to tackle it.

↓ **Yes**

Have you written to **parents/carers** about your findings, explained that homophobic bullying can affect all pupils, and indicated that policies will change to reflect this?	**No** →	Parents may think that preventing homophobic bullying means encouraging pupils to be gay. It doesn't. Help them understand this.

↓ **Yes**

Have you told all **staff** (including unpaid staff) about your findings? Do they understand the impact homophobic bullying has on attainment? Do they feel committed to tackling it?	**No** →	Staff may not prevent homophobic bullying if they don't understand it, or recognise the effect it has on pupils. They will also feel more confident about doing so if they have the backing of the leadership team.

↓ **Yes**

Do **pupils** understand that homophobic bullying will not be tolerated in school? Have you used tutorial time, policies, and other opportunities (such as curriculum) to tell them this in an age-appropriate way?	**No** →	Pupils will continue to bully others in a homophobic way if they are not told that it is wrong. Pupils who experience homophobic bullying will be less likely to come forward.

DL5: Developing policies, practices and procedures

Does the Governors' written statement of general principles for the behaviour policy make reference to bullying and homophobic bullying?	**No**	Look at the key policies that shape responses to bullying. Can they be more inclusive?

Yes

Is homophobic bullying referenced in the anti-bullying policies and procedures?	**No**	Staff and pupils will not necessarily presume that a generic policy includes homophobic bullying.

Yes

Have you conducted an audit of all other policies and procedures? For example, areas such as curriculum and safeguarding are relevant.	**No**	Preventing homophobic bullying can be done in a variety of contexts, not just a specific response to an incident. Explore all opportunities.

Yes

Have you consulted governors, parents, other staff, and pupils about changes to policies? Consultation can help achieve buy-in and counteract future criticism.	**No**	Consultation will make policies more effective and help achieve their implementation. It is also a requirement of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yes

Have you looked at existing anti-bullying strategies to see if they can be developed to include homophobic bullying?	**No**	Homophobic bullying does not necessarily need a completely new approach. Using existing mechanisms and methods can be equally effective.

Yes

Have you told other agencies about the progress you are making? Have you shared your experiences with the local authority and other schools?	**No**	Sharing knowledge helps others to prevent homophobic bullying and enables your school to feel proud of its achievements.

DL6: Developing the curriculum to prevent homophobic bullying

Have you reviewed the curriculum to identify opportunities to undertake anti-bullying work?	**No** →	Bullying does not just have to be tackled in the context of responding to incidents. Teaching and learning about respect and tolerance is key to preventing bullying.
↓ **Yes**		
Does the school curriculum make explicit reference to homophobic bullying?	**No** →	In so doing, staff will be given greater confidence to tackle and prevent homophobic bullying and look for ways to discuss this with pupils.
↓ **Yes**		
Do team leaders understand that anti-bullying including homophobic bullying should be incorporated into their curriculum?	**No** →	The curriculum in general provides lots of opportunities to talk about homophobic bullying and discrimination in an age-appropriate way. Explore all opportunities.
↓ **Yes**		
Have you identified specific ways to include homophobic bullying in PSHE, Citizenship and across the curriculum?	**No** →	These areas provide explicit opportunities to discuss bullying and therefore should include homophobic bullying.
↓ **Yes**		
Have you identified other opportunities to discuss homophobic bullying, such as class time, tutorial time, and general discussions?	**No** →	Tutorials and class time can all provide opportunities for pupils to raise issues and enter discussions. Teaching and learning about gay people needs to be age-appropriate, but pupils should feel able to raise issues and discussions themselves, in a variety of contexts.
↓ **Yes**		
Have you considered specific activities that could be undertaken if a pupil is experiencing bullying because they have gay parents, or are gay themselves?	**No** →	Schools should be able to respond quickly to support individual pupils in an appropriate, helpful, and sensitive way. Developing strategies for targeted work will be useful for staff.

DL7: Steps for staff development

Do all staff understand the purpose of the anti-bullying policy and their responsibilities?	**No** →	Staff will not be able to prevent homophobic bullying if they do not understand the general policies about bullying.
Yes ↓		
Do staff understand, feel motivated and confident that they can intervene to prevent homophobic bullying?	**No** →	If staff lack confidence in responding to incidents of homophobic bullying, they are likely to let incidents go without intervening.
Yes ↓		
Do staff know how to talk to young people experiencing homophobic bullying? Have they been trained to respond appropriately to young people in secondary schools who are lesbian, gay or bisexual?	**No** →	If a staff member responds inappropriately to a pupil the pupil will feel unsupported and will be unlikely to report any future incidents.
Yes ↓		
Do staff know how to support pupils who are experiencing homophobic bullying but are not gay? Do they understand that this may require a different response?	**No** →	A pupil may not tell anyone they are experiencing homophobic bullying if they think the teacher will think they are gay. Staff need to be trained to ask sensitive questions.
Yes ↓		
Are all staff, including student teachers and unpaid staff, aware that homophobic bullying is unacceptable in school and that they should intervene?	**No** →	Staff often lack confidence about intervening in cases of homophobic bullying. All new staff need to be explicitly told they should intervene, and know how to do this.
Yes ↓		
Do all staff feel protected from homophobic bullying and know that they will have the full support of the leadership team if they experience it?	**No** →	Staff who do not feel safe at school will not want to stay, and will not be as effective in the classroom. Staff need to know that they are supported, even if they are gay.

For more on available training see the Resources section.

DL8: Making pupil support systems inclusive

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Pupils feel able to tell staff about homophobic bullying.	• All pupils know that homophobic bullying is included in the anti-bullying policy. • All pupils understand what homophobic bullying is and that it is unacceptable. • Staff feel motivated and committed to assist pupils, and understand relevant school policies.	
Pupils know how to report incidents, and understand what constitutes bullying.	• Pupils know what reporting structures exist and know when they can use them. • There are a number of reporting structures in place.	
Pupils feel able to tell staff they are lesbian, gay or bisexual if they want to do so.	• Staff have received training about how to support pupils who are gay. • Pupils know they will not be treated differently if they are gay, and will be protected from bullying.	
Staff understand how to identify pupils at risk, when confidentiality needs to be maintained, and in what circumstances confidentiality cannot be maintained.	• Staff understand that being gay in itself does not constitute a reason to breach confidentiality. (continued)	

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
	• Staff respect requests for confidentiality and understand when it cannot be maintained (e.g. when it is judged that the young person is at risk of serious harm), and what needs to be done in such circumstances.	
Pupils have input into homophobic bullying strategies.	• Pupils are consulted about strategies and are invited to comment. • Pupils help write anti-bullying policies and suggest strategies.	
Pupils are able to raise concerns anonymously.	• Pupils can raise concerns via suggestion boxes. • Pupils understand that they can talk to peer supporters in confidence.	
Pupils who provide support understand issues about homophobic bullying.	• Other pupils understand what homophobic bullying looks like and know how to intervene. • Pupils know how to treat lesbian and gay pupils with respect.	
Pupils have access to age-appropriate information about local support services.	• All staff know where to find information about local LGB groups or useful websites. • Age-appropriate information is available on school notice boards. • Pupils know how to use the internet safely.	

DL9: Working with pupils who bully

Does the pupil understand that homophobic bullying is not acceptable in school? Do they understand why?	**No**	Pupils cannot be expected to learn by themselves that homophobic bullying is unacceptable. They need to be told.
Yes ↓		
Does the pupil understand that homophobic language is unacceptable – "I'm not reading that, it's gay"?	**No**	If a pupil is not told that homophobic language is always unacceptable, they may not understand that homophobic bullying is wrong.
Yes ↓		
Are there opportunities in school to talk about the damage that homophobic bullying does? Do young people understand that it is not acceptable in society?	**No**	Pupils may not realise that treating gay people differently is now illegal in the workplace and is unacceptable in society. Do they realise their attitudes are prejudiced?
Yes ↓		
Do parents understand that homophobic bullying is wrong, regardless of their opinion about gay people? Do pupils understand the difference?	**No**	Even if pupils and parents have certain religious or moral views about gay people, this does not mean that bullying people is allowed.
Yes ↓		
Are staff confident about discussing issues about sexual orientation in class, even if pupils express uncomfortable opinions? Do they know the difference between strong views and bullying?	**No**	Pupils should not be discouraged from expressing their views about gay people and issues but they should understand the difference between expressing an opinion and bullying.
Yes ↓		
Do pupils understand the sanctions that are in place in relation to homophobic bullying? Do parents understand?	**No**	Pupils who bully need to understand that the sanctions applied to them will be the same as any other form of bullying.

DL10: Working with parents and carers

Have you communicated and consulted with parents/carers about changes to policies relating to homophobic bullying?	**No** →	Parents/carers are less likely to be resistant to strategies to prevent homophobic bullying if they've been involved in plans.

Yes ↓

Do parents/carers understand that they have a responsibility to stop their child bullying?	**No** →	Parents/carers need to understand that they have a role to play in responding to homophobic bullying.

Yes ↓

Do parents/carers understand how to spot signs that their child is being bullied? Do they understand that homophobic bullying does not necessarily mean their child is gay?	**No** →	Parents/carers report incidents of bullying but may not know how to talk to a school about homophobic bullying. An open dialogue between parents/carers and teachers/staff will encourage reporting.

Yes ↓

Do parents/carers know how to complain about homophobic bullying? Do they know how to raise issues with the school?	**No** →	If parents/carers don't know who, what and how to report incidents, a situation may continue and get worse. Parents/carers must feel confident in school processes.

Yes ↓

Do all parents/carers feel able to be involved in school life? Are messages home inclusive? Do you talk about "parents" instead of assuming all pupils have a "mum or a dad"? Can gay parents get involved?	**No** →	If gay parents/carers think they will be treated differently, they are less likely to be involved in school life. Parents/carers and schools need to work together.

Yes ↓

Do parents/carers know where they can find support and information if their child is gay? Do they feel confident supporting their child?	**No** →	Parents/carers can respond negatively if their child is gay, sometimes even making them leave home. If they are supportive, pupils are more likely to tell about homophobic bullying.

DL11: Schools with a religious character (faith schools) and homophobic bullying

In any school there will be pupils and staff with a religious faith. In addition there are schools designated with a religious character. All the faith communities supporting this guidance are clear that homophobic bullying is unacceptable. Schools should develop clear tactics which challenge any homophobic bullying based on misunderstanding of religious teachings or practice.

Issue	Tactics
Vision statement of the school	Ensure that the school vision statement rejects all forms of bullying.
Curriculum	All schools should review teaching within their religious education curriculum, PSHE, SEAL programme or related programmes to ensure that the anti bullying stance of the school is clear.
Assemblies and collective worship	These provide opportunities to make clear the anti bullying stance of the school.
Use of faith community representatives	Headteachers and Governors should ensure that representatives of faith communities are clear about the legal and school stance on homophobic bullying. Headteachers should monitor the contribution by faith community representatives into the school to ensure the school vision is being met.
Pupil support systems	A pupil using a faith-based reason to validate homophobic bullying should be challenged in the same way as for any other pupil – stating the school stance and developing empathetic understanding. Specific religious teaching may also be used to supplement this approach and faith community representatives may have a key role in challenging the pupil's understanding and actions.

DL12: How to talk to pupils about homophobic language

A pupil makes a homophobic remark such as "That's so gay" or "Oi, pass me a pen you dyke". Does the school have an explicit policy stating homophobic language is unacceptable?Parents/carers are less likely to be resistant to strategies to prevent homophobic bullying if they've been involved in plans.

No → Staff cannot intervene effectively and respond to homophobic language if it is not part of policies and procedures.

Yes ↓

Tell the pupil that homophobic language is not acceptable in school. Explain that homophobic language is offensive and a form of bullying. Does the pupil understand?

Yes → There may be some lapses, and you may have to say it again, but pupils begin to understand that homophobic language is unacceptable and it stops.

No ↓

The pupil continues to make comments, as does the rest of the class. Explain in more detail the effect that homophobic bullying has on people. Does it stop?

Yes → The culture of a school is changing. In the same way pupils understand racism is unacceptable, they begin to understand that homophobic bullying and language is unacceptable.

No ↓

Remove the pupil from the classroom and talk to them in more detail about the effects of homophobic bullying. Outline that homophobic language is a form of bullying. Does the pupil understand?

Yes → Pupils need to understand that homophobic bullying is a form of discrimination and is taken seriously by the school. Pupils who understand this should stop using homophobic language. Pupils who experience homophobic bullying will be more confident about discussing other incidents with you if the school is seen to tackle incidents.

No ↓

Involve senior managers. The pupil should understand the sanctions that will apply if they continue to use homophobic language. Does this help?

Yes → It takes time to teach young people that homophobic bullying is unacceptable, especially if it has not been challenged in the past.

No ↓

Continued over

No

Invite parents in to discuss the attitude of the pupil. Even if parents, and pupils, think gay people should be treated differently, this does not mean homophobic bullying and language is acceptable. Pupils cannot be expected to learn by themselves that homophobic bullying is unacceptable. They need to be told.

Parents respond negatively

Take time to explain to parents why this policy is important as part of the anti-bullying policy of the school. Explain that all pupils should be able to feel safe at school. Reiterate that they have an obligation to help schools uphold policies.

DL13: Promoting positive messages about different families

Schools can find ways of discussing different families in age appropriate ways; this teaches pupils about respecting others who are not like themselves, which in turn discourages them from bullying. Young people, who are experiencing homophobic bullying because they have gay parents or family members, will feel better about telling a teacher if they know the school welcomes and respects their family. The following are some ideas for discussing families in class.

Age group	Lesson ideas	Other responses and strategies
4-7	**Families are different** • Who is in our family? Ask pupils to draw pictures of their family. • Talk about the differences between families – why are families different? How are they different? • What other sorts of families are there? • Ask the class to draw imaginary families and display them. **Relevant learning points:** • Families can be different but they all do the same sort of thing.	• If pupils tease other pupils for having gay parents, they should understand that this is a form of bullying and is not fair or nice. This should fit within a general anti-bullying strategy. Pupils need to understand that everyone is different. • Supporting pupils will be easier if teachers and support staff know their circumstances. Make sure literature encourages lesbian and gay parents to feel included. They are more likely to tell you they are gay if they know you won't treat them, or their child, differently. • Take care to be inclusive of all pupils in general activities.
8-11	**TV Families** • What do families look like on television? • Are they like our families? • How are they different? Do they act like your family? • What sort of families don't appear on television?	• Teachers should make an effort to find opportunities to introduce the idea of different families, including families with gay parents. This will discourage homophobic bullying.

Age group	Lesson ideas	Other responses and strategies
8-11 continued	• Why don't they appear on television? This is an opportunity to talk about gay families and why they might not appear on television. • What views do other groups have about families? **Relevant learning points:** • The media does not always reflect what society really looks like. • The media has an impact on how we see the world. • Sometimes the media may exclude people, including gay people.	• If pupils bully other pupils for having gay parents, they should be told clearly that this is a form of bullying and is covered by the anti-bullying policy. This should involve a general discussion about bullying including the way it affects a school and individual pupils. • Schools should be aware that when pupils enter secondary school, they are likely to come into contact with more pupils, some of whom are likely to have gay parents or family members. Discussing different families is a key aspect of transition to secondary school.
11-14	**Making families work** • What needs to be in place to make a family work well? Pupils can be guided to talk about respect and listening to each other, the need to understand each other. • Why do things not always work so well? Where do areas of conflict arise? Pupils can talk about incidents where things go wrong. • What strategies can pupils introduce to make families work more effectively? What can they do? What should other members of the family do? • What role do older members of the family play, such as grandparents? What about siblings? • What might parents/carers be concerned about?	• Gay parents/carers of pupils entering secondary school should feel able to tell the school about this and should expect to be treated the same as heterosexual parents. Schools should indicate in literature that this will be the case. • Pupils who bully pupils for having gay parents should be told clearly that this is a form of homophobic bullying and will not be tolerated in the school. Sanctions should apply to pupils who continue to bully pupils in this way. • Schools should make efforts to talk inclusively about same-sex parents, for example, avoid assuming all pupils will have a "mum and dad". When schools discuss marriage, they may also discuss civil partnership and adoption rights for gay people.

DL13 continued		
Age group	**Lesson ideas**	**Other responses and strategies**
11-14 continued	**Learning points:** • Families work for lots of reasons – not just because they have a mum and a dad. Same sex parents can make good families. • Families look very different, but things that go wrong can go wrong for similar reasons. • What role do pupils play in making families work?	• Schools should ensure that all families feel able to be involved in school events, such as parent teacher associations and are welcome to apply to become governors. This will contribute to a more diverse school culture.
14+	**Who do we love? Prejudice against difference** • What does society say about relationships? What constitutes a "good relationship"? • What do different religions say about relationships? Research religious views of marriage, divorce, infidelity, same sex relationships. • What sorts of relationships exist in reality? • What is the impact of change in a family? How can that make people feel? • How can pupils experience bullying after divorce, separation or bereavement? What coping mechanisms might they adopt? **Learning points:** • Society has certain views about relationships. In reality people form relationships for lots of reasons. • When is it acceptable to judge other relationships?	• Pupils should understand that same-sex families exist in wider society and they are likely to encounter them in a place of work. Treating a person differently in the work place because of their sexual orientation is against the law. • Schools should be aware that sometimes parents form same-sex relationships, even if they have previously been married to someone of the opposite sex. Acknowledging same sex parenting arrangements exist, and that they are not inferior, will help the pupil cope with the regular issue of family change more readily. It will also make them more likely to report incidents of homophobic bullying.

DL14: How to support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils

This script outlines possible ways to respond to a pupil who tells you they are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Remember to remind pupils that they can talk to you in confidence, but if they say anything which constitutes a safeguarding risk, you will need to involve other people. Being gay is not in itself a risk, but when it is judged that a young person is at risk of significant harm in some other way this will result in an obligation to disclose.

Pupil: Sir, I think I might be gay.
Staff: Ok. I'm glad you've come to talk to me about it. How do you feel?
Pupil: Scared, alone, I don't know anyone else who is gay.
Staff: Well, you won't be the only gay pupil in this school. It is ok to be gay you know. Have you discussed this with your parents?

Pupil: No. I don't want to tell them because I'm worried about how they'll react.	**Pupil:** No, but I'm going to tell them soon.	**Pupil:** Yes. My dad refuses to speak to me.
Staff: Ok, we can talk about that later and think about some ways to approach it.	**Staff:** Good. Have you thought about how they might react?	**Staff:** Ok, well we can help you with that. What does your mum say? Is there anyone else in your family who can help? There are organisations that can help – I can give you their details.

Staff: Have you met anybody else who is gay? Or joined any groups or looked at resources?

Pupil: No. I'm not sure where to begin. I'd like to meet other people.	**Pupil:** Yes, I've looked on some internet sites but haven't met anyone my own age yet.	**Pupil:** Yes. I've gone to the local bar and club sometimes, when I've been able to get in.

Staff: Well, there's a local youth group that meets every week. There are also websites for young people. I can give you the details of them, and some advice about how to use the internet safely.

Staff: There are some good youth sites. I'll give you the details, but you need to very careful on the web. If you find that you are being contacted by adults be very cautious and alert a parent/carer or teacher immediately.

Staff: Have you thought about going to the local youth group instead? You'll be able to meet people of your own age. You are underage, and shouldn't be going to clubs. I'll get you the details.

Staff: Does anyone at school know? Has anyone treated you any differently because you are gay?

Pupil: No, they don't know, and I don't want them too either. I'm scared I'll get bullied.

Pupil: Some know and are supportive, but I don't want the others to find out.

Pupil: Yes, they all know and some of the boys give me a hard time about it.

Staff: We won't let that happen. Homophobic bullying is not tolerated in this school, and we will respond effectively to any incidents.

Staff: What do your friends think? Will they be supportive? We won't tolerate homophobic bullying in this school.

Staff: I'm glad you've told me. I'll be able to help you sort this out. Do you feel able to give me any names/times when incidents have occurred?

Staff: I'm glad you've told me. You have nothing to be ashamed of – lots of people are gay. I will find you the details of the youth group – that is better than going to clubs and pubs. And I'll find details of groups that your parents might want to contact. I also want you to tell me if anybody bullies you. We can't stop it if you don't tell us.

DL15: Coming out stories

Amanda, 15

I realised I was a lesbian at quite a young age – I think I was 12 or 13 when I realised but I didn't tell anyone or do anything about it until I was 14. Before then I'd gone out with boys and tried to fit in with the other girls but I wasn't really comfortable. I first told my best mate at the time that I fancied girls. She was shocked but promised not to tell anyone. She did though. She told all the other girls in our group that I had said I had fancied her. They told all the boys and then suddenly everyone knew. They said they didn't want to get changed with me during gym because I was looking at them. My teacher made me wait until they had all finished changing and then I changed even though it made me late for class.

I eventually found a local youth group. Not many girls go, but they are better mates than the mates at school and at least I get to hang out without getting the p**s taken out of me all the time. I'd like to meet other girls, and get a girlfriend but I don't know where to go to do that. My parents check what I use the internet for so I don't want to use the computer at home; I haven't told my parents yet. I don't think I could use the school computers. We never mention gay stuff in school, unless it's to have a go at someone so I don't really feel able to be myself. When everyone talks about which film star they fancy or whatever, I just go quiet and stay out of it. School is quite a lonely place to be, but I'll be through soon then I can go elsewhere.

Stephan, 18

At primary school I always played with girls and never played football with the boys. I was teased a lot for it by the boys at school but felt confident that there was nothing wrong about boys playing with girls and the teasing never got to me. Things changed at secondary school however, and my inability to interact with other boys through things like football was immediately picked up on. I heard the usual insults about me being gay or a faggot, not only because I didn't like football and sports, but because I was intelligent and because I came from a certain type of family (not working class). My intelligence and perceived background (it was an inner city secondary school and I had well spoken and intelligent parents with professional jobs) were viewed as signs that I was gay.

I had worked out that I was gay – and the fact I couldn't change it – by the time I was 13 but didn't dare to tell anyone. The bullying continued in all areas, both physical and verbal, and by everyone. By Year 9 it became particularly acute during PE classes leading me to dread taking part. I started forging permission from my parents to excuse me from PE and that escalated to me truanting off school and forging sick notes from my mum. A couple of times I got caught at home truanting by my dad, and when my mum and dad sat me down and asked why I had to tell them I was being bullied and how severe it was. I didn't want to mention that I was gay and people were calling me gay. My dad, who was chair of governors at my school, was furious that his son was suffering from such fear and paranoia and approached the school to demand that I be excused from PE on the grounds it was essentially making me

mentally ill. The school complied and I spent the last two years at school not attending PE which stopped me being exposed to the worst of the bullying.

We got internet access at home when I was 14 – I think my parents wanted to give me some access to the outside world as I didn't have any friends at all either inside or outside school. Through the internet I found out more information about being gay and gay lifestyles and made some friends online who supported me. They supported me through coming out to my sister and my mum and dad at 15 and they all were fine about it. Living in London was beneficial in that I knew that I could access a community if I wanted to, but on a few occasions I was made to feel very uncomfortable, particularly because I wasn't sexually active and had no desire to be at 15, so I didn't feel comfortable going to gay venues.

After school I attended a FE college, far away from my home so as to get away from the bullies. I felt entirely comfortable about my sexuality and made friends I could be open about it with.

DL16: Responding to verbal incidents in primary school

Pupils in primary school may not necessarily understand that their comments are inappropriate and constitute bullying. This script can be used by school staff who are considering how they might handle a verbal incident. It provides a model for them to think through. When responding to an actual incident staff will also want to consider the school's hierarchy of sanctions and existing guidance on behaviour and bullying.

John and Sam are in the playground. Sam calls John a "gay boy" because he fell over and started crying.

Questions to be asked by the teacher	Points to consider
John tells you what Sam has said, or you overheard it.	
To John: Hello, can you tell me what just happened?	Has John got gay parents or other family members who are gay? Is this a motivating factor for the homophobic comment?
To Sam: Can you tell me what you just said?	Sam should repeat what has been said. Does he realise at this stage that his comment was inappropriate?
To Sam: What made you say this?	Try and establish why homophobic bullying has played a part here. Does the pupil understand the difference between heterosexual people and gay people, or is his comment made in ignorance?
To Sam: How do you think your comment made John feel, Sam?	Does Sam understand that his comment can be hurtful?
To John: How do you feel about what Sam said John?	Make sure Sam understands how John feels.
To Sam: Sam, do you understand that calling someone "gay" because they are upset isn't very nice?	Sam needs to understand that calling someone "gay" because he's done something that he thinks is weak is not acceptable.

Questions to be asked by the teacher	Points to consider
Sam says: But Sarah's mum is gay.	Sam is confused because sometimes the word gay is used to describe someone, but when he uses it, it is bad.
To Sam: Sam, some people are gay, and there is nothing wrong with that. But when you use words to tease someone that becomes mean. John is very upset about what you said.	Does Sam understand the difference? Sam has to understand the harm he has done to John.
To John: What would you like Sam to do now John?	John must have the opportunity to say what he would like to happen.
To Sam: What do you think you should do Sam?	Can Sam identify ways to resolve the conflict?
To Sam: I think you should say sorry to John, and promise not to use those words again.	You should agree some actions with John and Sam, depending on the sanctions that your school normally uses.

You must now keep an eye on Sam, and ensure that he understands why this language shouldn't be used, and doesn't do it again. If he continues to do it, then you might have to follow the hierarchy of sanctions to prevent homophobic bullying happening in the future.

DL17: Responding to verbal incidents in secondary school

Pupils in secondary school are likely to understand that gay people exist, and therefore their comments will be made in this context.

Laura has been experiencing homophobic bullying for some time. A group of girls have been spreading rumours about her and excluding her and calling her names. Laura has told you what is going on, and you have organised a meeting with the girls involved. Laura has chosen not to be there. This script should be used with the school's behaviour policy in mind and alongside wider guidance on bullying and behaviour.

Questions to be asked by the teacher	Points to consider
Teacher: I understand that something has been going on between you and Laura? Can you tell me what has happened?	Will they recognise that they have been bullying Laura? Will they understand that they have been homophobic?
Girls: She's a lezza miss. She keeps looking at us funny, she fancies us. It's weird.	This is a common excuse for homophobic bullying and can distract from the main issue.
Teacher: Can you tell me how you've been treating Laura?	It is important that you neither confirm nor deny that Laura is gay. It's not relevant to this conversation; what is important is that they are treating Laura differently because they think she is gay.
Girls: We don't want to hang out with her, or get changed in front of her.	They are acknowledging that they are excluding her.
Teacher: Anything else?	It is important that they understand what has happened.
Girls: Well, we call her names and stuff but she deserves it.	And admit what has happened.
Teacher: And are you all involved?	What part does each of them take in the bullying?

Questions to be asked by the teacher	Points to consider
Girls: Well yeah, none of us want to be friends with a dyke.	
Teacher: What effect do you think this is having on Laura?	The girls should think about the effect that their behaviour is having on Laura.
Teacher: Do you think Laura wants to be treated differently?	The girls need to consider their behaviour in the context of prejudice.
Teacher: Do you realise that what you are doing is a form of bullying?	The girls may not understand that their behaviour constitutes bullying.
Teacher: Do you understand what sanctions are in place for people who bully? This school will not tolerate homophobic bullying under any circumstances.	The girls must link the fact that they are being homophobic with the fact that this is a form of bullying, and that the hierarchy of sanctions will apply.
Teacher: Ok, how are we going to make this situation better?	Give the girls an opportunity to consider how they can change their behaviour.
Teacher: I think it would be a good idea to have another meeting with Laura where we can talk about this further and you can start by apologising.	It is important to ensure that the girls understand that their behaviour will not be tolerated again and they must make amends.
Teacher: If this behaviour continues, more serious steps will be taken – this might mean a meeting with the Head teacher.	It is essential that Laura can continue to discuss incidents with you, and the girls know you are monitoring their behaviour.

DL18: Responding to physical homophobic bullying

This summarises how staff should respond to serious incidents of physical homophobic bullying where safeguarding is a concern. It is intended to be used in the context of existent school policy and alongside current guidance on behaviour and bullying. Information about day-to-day intervention strategies can be found in the section relating to verbal abuse.

Identifying possible incidents of physical abuse
* You observe an incident of physical abuse.

* Make sure your interaction with the pupil is sensitive. Do not assume that the pupil is gay; this may discourage them from discussing the issue with you.

* Decide what action needs to be taken – can the issue be resolved between staff, the pupil and the bully? Can the same methods of intervention used in verbal bullying be applied in this case?

* Is it an isolated incident or has it been going on for some time?

* Follow agreed sanctions, as set out in the school anti-bullying policy.

Responding to a pupil who tells you about an incident
* Respond promptly and calmly to the pupil's disclosure. Do not assume that they are gay, just because they have experienced homophobic bullying. However, be responsive and respectful if they do tell you they are gay.

* Make it clear that it will be necessary to tell other people about the incident. This does not mean you will tell people that the pupil is gay, just about the physical abuse. Make sure you follow procedures for reporting incidents.

* Give the pupil appropriate reassurance and support.

* Talk to the pupil at their pace; do not rush them or ask them unnecessary questions.

* Record the incident, and the details of the incident.

* Follow agreed procedures, as set out in the school anti-bullying policy.

Following policies and procedures
* Record all the information whilst it's still fresh in your memory.

* Make sure you make a distinction between what you have been told, what you observed, and what you've learnt from elsewhere.

* Make sure that information that can be kept confidential (for example, if a pupil has told you they are gay) is kept confidential. Be familiar with school policy on confidentiality, and the times when you must breach this (e.g. when it is judged that the young person is at risk of significant harm). This is particularly important if other agencies (and parents) are likely to be involved in the case later on.

* Make sure that some members of the school bullying team are aware of the incident. This will be important if the situation escalates, and other people might have to arbitrate.

Future work
* Ensure that the pupil is safe and is not experiencing on-going homophobic physical abuse.

* Examine new strategies for preventing homophobic bullying.

* Follow the hierarchy of sanctions to ensure bullies are held to account.

* Work with the bullies. Find out why they are behaving in this way

DL19: School evaluation form for head teachers preventing and responding to homophobic bullying

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Providing leadership. Head teachers recognise the unique role that they have to provide clear leadership to the school community in preventing homophobic bullying.	• Announcement to parents/carers, pupils, staff and governors that the head teacher will take the lead in preventing homophobic bullying. • Staff feel empowered and able to respond to incidents.	
Acknowledging homophobic bullying. Head teachers acknowledge that homophobic bullying exists and recognise that specific strategies need to be introduced to prevent it.	• Inclusion of homophobic bullying in the written statement of general principles. • Discussion with governors and strategy approved.	
Understanding the legal imperatives for preventing and responding to homophobic bullying. Head teachers understand their legal obligations to keep children and young people safe.	• Familiar with the law and how this applies to keeping pupils safe. • Communicated these responsibilities to the senior leadership team and anti-bullying lead.	
Identified who experiences homophobic bullying and in what contexts. Head teachers understand homophobic bullying and what it looks like and who is affected.	• Head teachers know how to spot incidents of homophobic bullying. • Head teachers and staff recognise that anyone can experience homophobic bullying.	

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Collected data Head teachers recognise that gathering data about homophobic bullying is essential if it is to be prevented. Barriers might exist to reporting, so head teachers think of a variety of ways of collecting data.	• Checked to see whether existing reporting structures can be expanded to include homophobic bullying. • Asked staff and parents/carers about their thoughts and experiences. • Asked pupil councils and peer mentors. • Developed confidential reporting structures. • Conducted "soft" anonymous surveys.	
Raising awareness Heads recognise that homophobic bullying won't be prevented if people don't know what it is, or what counts as homophobic bullying. They recognise that parents might also be resistant if they don't fully understand what is being done.	• Consultation with parents/carers and regular up-dates about work and progress. • Consultation with staff, including increased awareness about their rights and responsibilities. • Information sharing and training with senior leaders and governors.	
Developing policies Heads recognise that developing policies to include homophobic bullying is essential.	• Updated existing anti-bullying policies to include homophobic bullying. • Conducted an audit of other policies and identified where homophobic bullying might be relevant and amended accordingly.	

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Evaluated curriculum opportunities Head teachers recognise that the curriculum creates many opportunities to discuss homophobic bullying, and prevent it, in an age-appropriate way.	• Met with subject heads and identified opportunities for discussion about homophobic bullying. • Identified opportunities in tutorial time and group discussion.	
Working with parents Head teachers recognise that parents need to help prevent all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying.	• All staff know how to defend actions to prevent homophobic bullying to parents. • All parents/carers (including those who are gay) feel able to be involved in school life.	
Working with staff Head teachers understand that staff who experience bullying are unlikely to be happy in school.	• All staff should feel protected from homophobic bullying and be supported by the senior leadership team if any incidents arise. • All staff should feel confident, motivated and empowered to respond to homophobic bullying and have the tools to do so.	
Training Head teachers understand that new and existing staff need training to effectively prevent and respond to homophobic bullying.	• Head teachers have identified a training strategy for all staff. • Head teachers have discussed training provision with the local authority and other local schools.	

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Multi-agency working. Head teachers recognise that homophobic bullying can put young people at risk and therefore working with other agencies is important to keep pupils safe.	• Schools have contacted their local authority to see what they are doing about homophobic bullying. • Schools have identified other partners who may be able to help with training and intervention in cases of homophobic bullying.	
Celebrating progress Head teachers recognise that a school community is motivated when they feel they are making progress.	• Alert other agencies and schools about the work being done. • Invite speakers who can celebrate the work being done. • Write to parents and governors about progress.	
Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils in secondary schools. Head teachers recognise that sensitive responses to gay pupils will help them feel safe, more able to be themselves, and more confident about reporting incidents of homophobic bullying.	• Teachers and staff know how to provide support to pupils who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. • Teachers and staff know when to respect confidentiality and to spot incidents where pupils are at risk, and when they are safe.	
Developing intervention strategies. Head teachers understand that incidents of homophobic bullying must be dealt with within a hierarchy of sanctions.	• The sanctions have been audited and amended to incorporate homophobic bullying. • All staff understand the sensitivities around homophobic bullying.	

Objective	Example of progress	Your school's activity
Managing complaints and compliments. Head teachers understand that parents/carers and pupils may want to complain about incidents and this is a valuable tool for improving understanding.	• Parents and carers know how to complain and how their complaint will be dealt with. • Pupils know how to raise complaints and understand that they will be supported if they raise concerns.	

DL20: Ideas about how to discuss homophobic bullying in secondary school

Idea	Notes to consider
During **tutorial time**, encourage pupils to think about what forms homophobic bullying takes. Is it just about bullying gay pupils? Think about: • Language pupils' use with each other. • How pupils judge others when they don't act in an expected way. • How we assume being different is inferior. • What are the similarities and differences between racist bullying, religious bullying and sexist bullying?	• If there are gay pupils in your class, be careful not to treat them differently or expect them to offer more insight or observations, unless they want to. Gay pupils report that when issues relating to sexual orientation are raised in class, they are picked out, or referred to by name in examples. • Expect some views to be uncomfortable. Pupils won't learn overnight that homophobic bullying is unacceptable, nor will they be expected to change their mind immediately. The point is to indicate that homophobic bullying is unacceptable.
Produce an age-appropriate **poster** or leaflet that explains what homophobic bullying is and the effect it has. Circulate this via notice boards, or via the school intranet. Think about: • Pupils who experience homophobic bullying don't always consider it to be a form of bullying. They need to be able to identify incidents. • Pupils may not want to raise issues about bullying in a public place. This gives them the tools they need. • Bullies may not know they are bullies. This gives them a private space to consider their actions.	• Ensure that the leaflet details what bullying is, and includes reference to cyberbullying and bullying outside school. • State explicitly that homophobic bullying is not tolerated in schools, and staff will respond effectively if they are told about incidents. Some pupils fear that staff will bully them as well, especially if they are gay. • Provide age-appropriate information about where gay pupils can get external support – such as good websites, or local youth groups. • Consider naming a teacher who pupils can discuss sexuality issues with. This will reassure them that the teacher will be trustworthy. Neither staff nor pupils should feel obliged to disclose any personal information.

Idea	Notes to consider
Discuss with pupils the sensitivities around **reporting** homophobic bullying, and ask them to come up with ways to improve reporting of incidents. Learning objectives • pupils to understand why there might be sensitivities around reporting homophobic bullying. • to set out how the school responds to incidents of homophobic bullying.	• Pupils will be anxious about reporting homophobic bullying and this collective process will give you an opportunity to reiterate that staff understand these sensitivities. • Pupils are more likely to use systems that they have helped develop themselves. They will also be more likely to spot the loopholes in any system.
Sign up to national schemes, use resources from other organisations, seek out good practice and share your own.	• Talk about homophobic bullying in general work, as well as during tutorial, via newsletters, intranet, and celebratory days, including LGBT History month.

DL21: Key stage 1

Teachers can use this grid to think about opportunities to raise issues relevant to anti-bullying including homophobic bullying. Staff will already be mindful of the fact that some children may come from families where there is only one parent, where a parent/s may be deceased, or where children live with grand-parents or are in care. When planning and delivering lessons at KS1 staff will also want to consider if some pupils may have same-sex parents or lesbian and gay family members.

Staff will find that using this grid in conjunction with theme 3 of SEAL "Say no to bullying" is helpful. Staff will need to ensure that any conversations about homophobic bullying are age-appropriate. Where KS1 pupils unknowingly use homophobic language staff will want to consider advice in Download 16 (Responding to verbal incidents in Primary School) on how to respond.

Teaching points for class:	Relevance to homophobic bullying:
That there are different types of teasing and bullying, that bullying is wrong and that if they are being bullied they know how to get help.	Pupils understand what homophobic bullying is, the harm it can do, and what the school does to stop it.
To agree and follow rules for their group and classroom and understand how rules help them.	Why rules exist to stop homophobic bullying.
Rules to help pupils keep safe, and people that can help them stay safe.	Pupils understand where they can go if they are experiencing homophobic bullying, and who they can tell.
How to recognise how their behaviour affects other people.	Pupils understand that their actions, such as calling a pupil "gay" or teasing them for having same sex parents can affect them, and why it is bullying.
To identify and respect the differences and similarities between people.	Pupils understand that not all pupils have a mum and a dad, and might have important people in their life who are gay. Pupils respect these differences.

DL22: Key stage 2

Teachers can use this grid to think about cross-curricular opportunities to teach specifically about anti-bullying including homophobic bullying. They may find it helpful to use this in association with theme 3 of the SEAL resource pack, "Say no to bullying".

Teaching points for class:	Relevance to homophobic bullying:	Other curriculum opportunities:
To realise the nature and consequences of racism, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours and how to respond to them and ask for help.	Pupils, in this context, can equally learn about the nature and consequences of homophobic bullying, including how to respond and ask for help.	Circle time: What is bullying? Why do people bully? Why might some be bullied? How can we stop it?
To realise the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviours, such as bullying and racism, on individuals and communities.	Homophobic bullying is anti-social and aggressive. Pupils understand this.	Circle time: Who experiences discrimination and bullying in society? What happens? Who does the bullying? Do similar things happen in school?
Why and how rules and laws are made and enforced, why different rules are needed in different situations and how to take part in making and changing rules.	Pupils understand that the school makes and sets rules about homophobic bullying in order to stop it happening. Pupils have input into those rules.	Group work: What rules exist in society that protect minorities from discrimination? Why do these rules exist? What similar rules do we have in schools?
To recognise and challenge stereotypes.	Pupils understand that sometimes "boys don't act like boys" and "girls don't act like girls". Pupils understand that bullying someone in this context can be a form of homophobic bullying.	Project work: Do girls and boys behave in the same way? In what way are they different? How do we expect girls and boys to behave? What happens when they don't?

Teaching points for class:	Relevance to homophobic bullying:	Other curriculum opportunities:
That differences and similarities between people arise from a number of factors.	Pupils understand that some people are lesbian, gay or bisexual and this does not make them inferior nor does it justify discrimination and bullying.	Different families: How are families shown on television and in the media? How does that differ to our own families? What similarities are there?
That their actions affect themselves and others, to care about other people's feelings and try to see things from their point of view.	Pupils understand that not all young people will be the same as them, and bullying them for being "different" is unfair and unkind.	Group activity: Feelings tree. How do I feel today? What makes me feel better? What makes me feel worse? How does being bullied affect how I feel? How does bullying someone make me feel?

DL23: Key stage 3

Teachers can use this grid to think about opportunities to teach specifically about anti-bullying including homophobic bullying. The teaching points provide examples of curriculum contexts other than PSHE.

Teaching points for class:	Relevance to homophobic bullying:	Other curriculum opportunities:
To respect the differences between people as they develop their own sense of identity.	Homophobic bullying occurs because people are thought to be "different" and so they are treated differently. Some people try to change their identity to conform or find different friends and groups.	Geography: People come from different cultures and speak different languages. Some people want to live in communities where they can be with similar people. For example, Bangladeshi communities, the large gay community in Brighton. Why might people do this? What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages?
About the effects of all types of stereotyping, prejudice, bullying, racism and discrimination and how to challenge them assertively.	Homophobic bullying is based in prejudice and discrimination. Pupils who are bullied should feel able to challenge this, and report incidents. Pupils who bully should understand the effects of homophobic bullying.	History: People have been discriminated against in the past because of prejudice. During the holocaust, Jewish, elderly, disabled and gay people were killed because of their identity.
How to empathise with people different from ourselves.	Homophobic bullying occurs when "boys don't act like boys" and "girls don't act like girls". Pupils should understand that people are different and act in different ways and bullying because of this is damaging.	PE and sport science: What is the impact of gender-specific sports? What happens when a boy is good at dancing or gymnastics? What happens when a girl is good at rugby or hockey?

Teaching points for class:	Relevance to homophobic bullying:	Other curriculum opportunities:
About the role and feelings of parents and carers and the value of family life.	Pupils should understand that family structures can be different to their own. Pupils should feel able to talk about their own families, even if they have same sex parents or family members, and that the core values of families are the same in this context.	Citizenship: What makes families work? What things stop families working? Does a family have to have a mum and a dad in order to be successful?
Feel positive about themselves and participate.	Pupils should feel able to be themselves in school, and participate in activities that they want to take part in. They should be able to do this without experiencing homophobic bullying.	Performing Arts: Ask boys what it might be like to be the female character and girls what it might be like to be the male character? How does it feel to try and take on that character's role? How is gender relevant to the performance?
Find information and advice.	Schools who equip lesbian and gay pupils to find information and support safely will send a clear signal that they can report incidents of homophobic bullying and be taken seriously.	ICT: Pupils can find information on the internet, and know how to stay safe in chat rooms and message boards (see guidance on cyber-bullying in *Safe to Learn*).

DL24: Key stage 4 and 16+

Teachers can use this grid to think about opportunities to teach specifically about anti-bullying across the curriculum, including homophobic bullying. Teachers should help pupils make links between what they have learnt in the school's SRE/PSHE and other parts of the curriculum about human sexuality and respect for themselves and others.

Teaching points for class:	Relevance to homophobic bullying:	Other curriculum opportunities:
About the diversity of different ethnic groups and the power of prejudice.	Pupils can also be taught about the impact that prejudice has on the lesbian, gay and bisexual population, consider how homophobic bullying manifests itself in schools, and the impact this has on society in general. Pupils can also consider how people think about their own sexual orientation, and other people's.	English Literature: Several set texts in English Literature provide an opportunity to discuss sexual orientation. "*I know why the caged bird sings*" explores confusion about sexual identity, leading to unplanned pregnancy. "*Captain Corelli's Mandolin*" explores Carlos' range of emotions from pride to grief.
To challenge offending behaviour, prejudice, bullying, racism and discrimination and take the initiative in giving and receiving support.	Pupils can understand that homophobic bullying is a form of prejudice and discrimination, and that they have a responsibility to intervene when it is occurring amongst other pupils.	Developing pupil support systems: Older pupils can help develop and advice on pupil support systems that will enable them to intervene in cases of homophobic bullying.

Teaching points for class:	Relevance to homophobic bullying:	Other curriculum opportunities:
About the nature and importance of marriage in family life, the role and responsibilities of parents, and the quality of good parenting.	Pupils can understand that families take many different forms, and that same-sex parents can share the same core values as opposite sex parents. Developing understanding of this difference helps tackle prejudice. Pupils should feel able to talk about their own experiences.	Citizenship: Who do we love? What does society say about who we love? What is the impact of Civil Partnerships?
Feel positive about themselves and participate fully.	Pupils, regardless of sexual orientation, should feel positive about themselves and feel able to participate fully, even if their activities and interests are not the same as other pupils. This can prompt homophobic bullying, which should be challenged.	During group sessions: Older pupils can deliver sessions to younger pupils against stereotyping. Older pupils involved in non-traditional activities should also showcase what they are doing to younger pupils.
Find information and provide advice.	Lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils should be able to access advice and support in order to stay safe and enjoy and achieve. Pupils should feel supported in providing help and advice to younger pupils experiencing homophobic bullying.	ICT: Pupils know how to find information about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues including finding information so they can avoid risk-taking experiences. Are able to provide information and guidance to younger pupils. Are aware how to use the internet safely (see DCSF guidance on cyber-bullying in *Safe to Learn*).
Prepare for change.	Pupils should understand that extensive legislation exists that prevents discrimination against people on the grounds of sexual orientation and that homophobic bullying will not be tolerated at work.	PSHE: The world of work. What laws exist in employment that protects people from discrimination? What impact does that have on society? What impact does it have on pupils leaving school?

DL25: Holding bullies to account

Does the pupil understand that the school will not allow homophobic bullying to go unchallenged? Do they understand why?	**No** →	Pupils cannot be expected to learn overnight that homophobic bullying is unacceptable. They need to learn this.

Yes ↓

Does the pupil understand the impact their actions have had on the pupil? Do they recognise what they have done?	**No** →	The pupil must acknowledge the harm they have done, and why the actions are in breach of school policy. They must also, where relevant, understand that their personal views do not justify bullying.

Yes ↓

Does the pupil recognise that action needs to be taken to make the bullied pupil feel better? Do they recognise responsibility?	**No** →	It is crucial that the pupil understands that they have a role to play in making the situation better. They should make suggestions about next steps, and understand that the bullied person may have a view.

Yes ↓

Will the pupil make assurances that they will not bully someone again? Do they understand that the incident cannot be repeated?	**No** →	The pupil must understand that the key to resolving the incident is a commitment not to re-offend. They must appreciate the importance of a general change in his behaviour.

Yes ↓

Does the pupil understand what other sanctions will apply if they continue to bully? Are they clear about the escalation process, and how this can ultimately end in suspension or exclusion?	**No** →	Pupils should not be discouraged from expressing their views about gay people and issues but they should understand the difference between expressing an opinion and bullying.

Yes ↓

Are parents aware of the policies that apply to homophobic bullying? Do they understand the consequences of their child's actions?	**No** →	Parents need to appreciate the severity of homophobic bullying and understand what sanctions will apply if they are to help prevent bullying.

DL26: Supporting those harmed by bullying

A pupil reports an incident of homophobic bullying. Do you understand the effect that homophobic bullying has on pupils?	**No**	Familiarise yourself with this guidance. Don't assume that the pupil is gay, or necessarily wants to talk to you about being gay. Address the incident first and foremost.
Yes ↓		
Have you provided a private and calm space for the pupil to tell you exactly what has happened?	**No**	The pupil needs to feel safe and able to explain the incident/s. They must be able to give you names and times and as much detail as possible. Create the space for this to occur.
Yes ↓		
Have you asked the pupil how the incident has made them feel? Is the pupil at risk at all? Is there a need to involve other people and agencies?	**No**	Not all pupils experience bullying in the same way or are affected in the same way. If the pupil is reporting a period of systematic bullying there may be issues regarding safeguarding that you need to consider.
Yes ↓		
Has the pupil indicated what they would like to happen and what the next steps should be? Do they understand that the school will take the issue seriously?	**No**	If the pupil thinks that there are no consequences as a result of their disclosure, they are unlikely to tell you if any further incidents occur. Establishing next steps is central to gaining confidence.
Yes ↓		
Have you discussed whether or not the pupil is happy for you to discuss the incident with others? Are there issues around confidentiality? Do you feel able to record the incident in a formal log?	**No**	Pupils may not want parents to be informed about incidents of homophobic bullying. Agree steps to tackle the bullying, but be clear to the pupil the situations in which confidentiality cannot be maintained (i.e. safeguarding issues)
Yes ↓		
Is the pupil gay? Are there other issues relating to safety and support?	**Yes**	If the pupil is gay, they may feel responsible for the bullying and may have other concerns. Provide effective and considerate support.

DL27: The experiences of girls

Girls, and young women, can experience homophobic bullying in ways that are different from boys. Understanding those differences can enable schools to support them more effectively.

A girl may experience homophobic bullying if she:

- Doesn't have a boyfriend, or does not wish to have a boyfriend.

- Is particularly studious or shy and may not want to do the same things as the other girls.

- May have gay parents, or other family members.

- May be particularly vocal in her views about gay rights, and women's rights.

- May be good at sports, and enjoy activities that are traditionally "male".

- May be thought to "look gay" or particularly masculine.

- Is openly lesbian.

The experience	How to provide support
Verbal abuse: This is the most common form of bullying for girls. Girls are "accused" of being gay, and excluded from groups. Rumours can be spread about her, and can quickly escalate. Girls report that they do not want to be associated with girls who are gay, or thought to be gay.	Schools should not ignore situations like this. Girls often do not report this sort of bullying in case staff assume that they are gay. Staff are often reluctant to intervene because they think it is a private matter between girls. Staff should use existing intervention strategies.
Coming out: Coming out can be particularly hard for a girl. There are very few gay women in the media, portrayed on the television or in books. This can lead to a particular sense of isolation which is compounded through bullying. Girls can find it hard to know how to be themselves. Some people also find it easier to accept that a boy is gay, but can more readily dismiss that a girl is gay. Gay women report that they are often told that their feelings will pass, and it is just a phase.	Young women who are gay need to be able to be themselves in school and feel that they are not doing anything wrong by being open about being gay. They need to know that the school will protect them from any form of bullying, and they will not be treated any differently by staff. Staff should take care not to be dismissive if a young woman discloses that she is gay. This will compound her sense of isolation and discourage her from discussing any incidents of bullying.

The experience	How to provide support
Gender roles: Bullying is often caused because girls don't dress or act in a way that is thought to be "like a girl". A pupil does not have to be gay to experience this sort of bullying. Some girls who are considered more "masculine" for example, may not wear make up, have short hair, wear trousers, don't have a boyfriend, report that they experience homophobic bullying.	Some girls report that they are encouraged to dress and present themselves in a more feminine way if they experience homophobic bullying. This is not appropriate. Pupils should be able to dress and look as they want, within the rules of the school. Pupils should be reassured that they do not deserve to be bullied because of how they look, and the school will intervene in incidents of bullying.
Sport: Girls who are particularly good at sport are sometimes "accused" of being gay. This can lead some girls to drop out of sport and try to fit in with the other girls. Gender roles are particularly defined in sport so girls also can feel discouraged from participating in non-traditional sports.	A joint approach of tackling sexist bullying and attitudes, as well as homophobic bullying is crucial here. Schools want pupils to participate in sports, and continue to participate. It is therefore important to target anti-bullying messages specifically in this area of the curriculum.
Physical abuse: Both girls and boys can physically abuse girls. Some pupils report being touched inappropriately by boys and girls as well as other forms of physical abuse. Some girls may feel responsible for this bullying and therefore be reluctant to report it.	Physical abuse raises crucial issues about safeguarding. Pupils must understand that any form of bullying is unacceptable, including physical bullying. Girls should also be made aware that they should not feel under pressure to do anything they do not want to do.
Cyberbullying: As on-line communities become more popular the scope to spread rumours and speculation about a girl increase. Girls who would not normally bully feel able to do so in this context.	Girls need to understand that spreading rumours and accusations via the internet is a form of bullying and the school will respond to it. A robust cyberbullying policy will enable staff to respond to these incidents. See cyberbullying guidelines in *Safe to Learn* for further guidance.
Risk taking behaviour: Girls who are gay, or think they might be, may seek support somewhere other than school, if they do not feel able to be themselves in that context. Girls report that they visit pubs and clubs in order to meet other women. Some girls also report that if they think they are gay, they feel it necessary to sleep with a man in order to "prove it". In this context, sex can be unplanned, and girls do not necessarily take the appropriate precautions. This presents serious safeguarding issues.	Young women who think they are gay need to find age-appropriate sources of support, for example, youth groups. Young women need to be taught about how to feel positive, without having to resort to risk taking behaviours and situations. Staff should be aware of the unique contexts in which young gay women can be exposed to drink, smoking and possibly drugs and feel able to offer help.

The experience	How to provide support
Social exclusion: Young people who come out can sometimes encounter negative reactions from parents and family. This can lead them to feel like they have to disengage from their family and sometimes leave home. If a girl is experiencing bullying as well, this can make both home and school a hostile environment.	If a girl does not feel supported at school, she might be reluctant to talk about incidents at home. Agencies are available to help parents and carers to support their children if they are gay. Schools need to demonstrate to pupils that they can help in this situation and will be supportive of pupils.
Outside school: Girls report that homophobic bullying takes place outside school, including on the way home. Girls who are "boyish" report incidents of groping and harassment on the bus. Pupils often feel that policies do not apply in these settings and that they are not protected, and are unable to report incidents.	Anti-bullying policies should make reference to incidents that take place outside school and pupils should feel able to report incidents. Working in partnership with the local police and transport providers can help in this situation.

DL28: The experiences of boys

Boys, and young men, can experience homophobic bullying in ways that are different from girls. Understanding those differences can enable schools to support them more effectively.

A boy may experience homophobic bullying if he:

• Doesn't have a girlfriend, and doesn't want one.

• Doesn't behave like the other boys.

• Has more friends who are girls.

• Is perceived to be particularly sensitive.

• Enjoys subjects and activities that are traditionally thought to be for girls.

• Doesn't enjoy or excel at sports.

• Is particularly vocal about gay rights and women's rights.

• Is openly gay.

The experience	How to provide support
Verbal abuse: Boys may experience high levels of verbal abuse, even if they are not gay. In order to avoid the risk of being called gay, boys may behave in stereotypically masculine ways, and assert their masculinity. Calling someone gay, and deriding them because of it, emphasises the bully's masculinity.	Schools need to intervene swiftly when verbal homophobic bullying occurs, even if pupils are being casual in their abuse. Pupils need to understand that calling someone gay as an indication that they are inferior and not manly enough, is unacceptable.
Coming out: Boys who come out at school sometimes feel in a very vulnerable position because they are "admitting" to something that is generally thought of as bad. Although there are an increasing number and range of role models for gay men, the hostile environment of a school can have a significant impact on self-esteem and self-worth.	Schools need to ensure that boys who are openly gay are given appropriate support and understand that there is nothing wrong with them being gay, and it does not mean they deserve to be bullied. Staff need to ensure that they do not treat the pupil any differently.

The experience	How to provide support
Gender roles: Schools can perpetuate a rigid view of the ways in which boys should behave and act. Boys who are told to "be a man" and to stop behaving like a "bunch of women", are therefore discouraged from being themselves, and leads to bullying of those who do not conform to fixed ideas about gender.	Schools need to challenge ideas about how boys and girls should behave and take care not to reinforce stereotypes. Accepting a range of behaviours in boys is central to preventing homophobic bullying.
Sport: Boys report that organised sport at schools provides a relatively unprotected space where homophobic bullying occurs. Bullying also occurs when boys aren't particularly good at a sport, and are reluctant to participate. Bullying discourages boys from participating in sport.	Schools want pupils to engage in sport and targeted strategies should be in place to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying in changing rooms and during activities. Schools should also consider providing a range of activities so boys can find safe ways of engaging.
Physical abuse: Boys are more likely to report incidents of physical abuse. Boys who are gay, or thought to be gay, can experience levels of physical and sexual abuse. For example, boys may be made to undress, may be touched inappropriately by other boys, and may be beaten up. Boys may be reluctant to report incidents, and incidents may be dismissed as "rough and tumble".	Physical abuse raises crucial safeguarding issues for a pupil. Boys who experience physical homophobic bullying may think they are somehow at fault and may be embarrassed about what has happened. If they are being called gay, they may think that it is equally "gay" and "weak" to report incidents. Schools need to indicate to boys that this sort of behaviour is unacceptable and be able to provide support.
Cyberbullying: As on-line communities become more popular the scope to spread rumours and speculation about a boy increases. Boys who would not normally bully feel able to do so in this context.	Boys need to understand that spreading rumours and accusations via the internet is a form of bullying and the school will respond to it. A robust cyberbullying policy will enable staff to respond to these incidents. See cyberbullying guidelines in *Safe to Learn* for guidance in this area.
Risk taking behaviour: Boys who do not feel able to be themselves at school, may seek support and experiences elsewhere. This may include gay clubs and pubs where they may be exposed to drink, smoking and possibly drugs. They may also seek sexual experiences with older men. Research indicates that young men sometimes have unprotected sex because they think they are not at risk from HIV infection.	Boys should be encouraged to seek support from their peer group, such as attending a youth group or finding safe youth led internet spaces. Schools should aim to talk to pupils about safe sex in a same sex context and to offer support and advice. When discussing choices about risk-taking behaviours, staff should be mindful of the unique situations experienced by gay pupils.

The experience	How to provide support
Social exclusion: Young people who come out can sometimes encounter negative reactions from parents and family. This can lead them to feel like they have to disengage from their family and sometimes leave home. If a boy is experiencing bullying as well, this can make both home and school a hostile environment.	If a boy does not feel supported at school, he might be reluctant to talk about incidents at home. Agencies are available to help parents and carers to support their children if they are gay. Schools need to demonstrate to pupils that they can help in this situation and will be supportive of pupils.
Outside school: Boys report that homophobic bullying occurs to and from school, and in their community. Boys may be particularly vulnerable yet feel unable to tell parents, or the school, about any incidents.	Anti-bullying policies should refer to incidents that take place outside school, and pupils should feel able to report incidents. Working in partnership with the local police and transport providers can help in this situation.

DL29: Summary – Addressing homophobic bullying in your school

To create an inclusive environment in your school where all pupils feel safe and are able to fulfil their potential requires a whole school approach. This should be integral to your school's mission statement and overall vision. The following ten steps can be taken to address homophobic bullying in your school:

1. **Acknowledge and identify the problem of bullying.** *The most important step is to recognise that all sorts of bullying takes place in schools, even if some forms are not immediately visible.*

2. **Develop policies which recognise the existence of homophobic bullying.** *Ensure that your anti-bullying policy takes homophobic bullying into account. Take other appropriate action such as challenging use of the word 'gay' and ensuring fast removal of graffiti.*

3. **Promote a positive social environment.** *The ethos of the entire school community, including all staff and parents, ought to be to support all pupils, regardless of their differences and to ensure that they are happy and safe.*

4. **Address staff training needs.** *Do not assume that only lesbian, gay and bisexual staff are able to deal with homophobic bullying, but ensure all staff are confident they know how to react to such situations.*

5. **Provide information and support for pupils.** *Make age-appropriate information about services and support available to secondary age pupils through noticeboards, school planners and websites.*

6. **Include addressing anti-bullying including homophobic bullying in curriculum planning.** *Try to include teaching about anti-bullying including homophobic bullying in the curriculum as a whole in an age-appropriate way and in accordance with National Curriculum subject frameworks and guidance so that pupils understand and appreciate diversity. This can be done formally in lesson times, but also informally e.g. by providing information about LGB groups in appropriate places within secondary schools (and in line with school policy) .*

7. **Feel able to use outside expertise.** *People working in external agencies (such as lesbian and gay charities, youth workers or local telephone helplines) can offer support, both outside and inside the classroom, in addressing homophobic bullying.*

8. **Use positive role models.** *Openly gay staff, governors, parents/carers and/or pupils can all be strong role models for the school.*

9. **Do not make assumptions.** *Do not assume that all pupils in a class are, or will be, heterosexual. Do not assume that all staff in a school or college are heterosexual. And do not assume that all pupils experiencing homophobic bullying are gay.*

10. **Celebrate achievements.** *Make successes known, such as updating the school anti-bullying policy or reducing the incidence of bullying, through tutorial time, newsletters, notice boards or websites etc.*

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