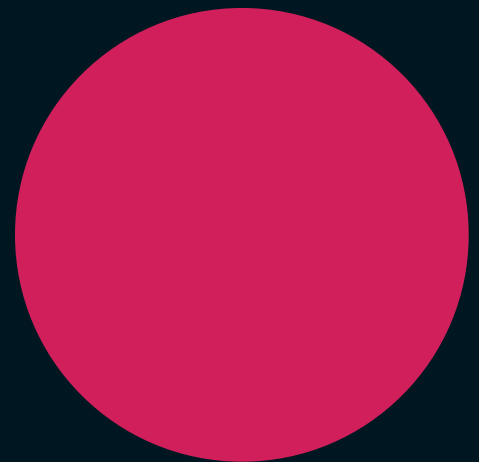


**Tackling  
homophobia  
in secondary  
schools**



# EDUCATION FOR ALL

**65 per cent** of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people experience homophobic bullying

**98 per cent** of young gay people hear the phrases ‘that’s so gay’ and ‘you’re so gay’ at school

**Less than a quarter** (23 per cent) of young gay people have been told that homophobic bullying is wrong in their school. In schools that have said homophobic bullying is wrong, gay young people are 60 per cent more likely not to have been bullied

## Homophobia in secondary schools

Homophobic bullying is endemic in Britain’s schools, causing permanent damage to the lives and life chances of young people and blighting the schools where it takes place.

But it’s not just an issue faced by lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils. Homophobic bullying can affect any young person, whatever their sexual orientation, just for being perceived as ‘different’ in some way. That includes children and young people who have gay and lesbian parents.

Every young person should be able to enjoy learning, free from fear of bullying, and in an environment which celebrates difference and embraces diversity.

**‘People call me “gay” everyday, sometimes people kick me or push me, they shut me out of games during school gym and they steal my belongings.’** James, 17, secondary school (South West)

**‘I have experienced bullying because of the way I look – other pupils asking me if I’m a boy or a girl.’**

Helen, 17, comprehensive school (North West)

## 1 2 3 4 5 Top ten recommendations for secondary schools

### 1 Acknowledge and identify the problem

Schools should acknowledge that homophobic bullying exists and take appropriate steps to prevent and respond to it by monitoring incidents and taking action when they happen.

### 2 Develop policies and tell young people about them

Schools’ anti-bullying policies should include homophobic bullying. Young people should be involved in the development of these policies, which should be displayed prominently in schools. All staff and young people should be informed of these policies.

### 3 Promote a positive social environment

Schools should ensure staff challenge all use of homophobic language to send a clear message that homophobic language and bullying are unacceptable.

### 4 Address staff training needs

Schools should ensure that staff receive training to help them prevent and respond to homophobic bullying and to support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils. Training should include an understanding of homophobic bullying and how it affects young people, as well as practical ways to respond to and prevent homophobic bullying from occurring.

### 5 Provide information and support

Schools should ensure that pupils have access to support and information by, for example, making resources available in school libraries and ensuring internet access to safe websites. Schools should also ensure that young people feel comfortable and confident to ask school staff for support and advice.

## What's the impact of homophobic bullying?

Young people who experience homophobic bullying find it hard to fit in at school. It affects their self-esteem and confidence, and ultimately can impact on their educational achievement and future life aspirations.

- Seven out of ten pupils who experience homophobic bullying state that it has had an impact on their school work
- Half have skipped school at some point because of it
- Over 60 per cent of young lesbian and gay people feel that there is neither an adult at home nor at school who they can talk to about being gay

'A lot of the serious bullying was at my previous school in the GCSE years – so I left the school early and went to a different 6th form college.'

Brad, 17, sixth form college (South East)

'At one point it really got to me, and I really couldn't take it anymore. I had to be taken from some of my lessons because it got so bad.'

Jay, 18, FE college (North East)

## Supporting teachers to tackle homophobic bullying

Many teachers are aware of homophobic bullying in their schools but are unsure how to tackle it and support lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. Schools need to have access to information, resources and support to help create environments which celebrate diversity and where all young people can enjoy learning and fulfil their potential, free from fear of bullying.

- Nine in ten secondary school teachers say children and young people, regardless of their sexual orientation, experience homophobic bullying
- 95 per cent of secondary school teachers report hearing the phrases 'you're so gay' or 'that's so gay' in their schools
- However, nine in ten secondary school staff have never received any specific training on how to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying

'Staff need to have more training in what is acceptable in the way they deal with gay issues as well as what they should not tolerate.'

Grace, teacher, secondary school (East Midlands)

# 6

### Integrate sexual orientation into the curriculum

Schools need to consider how to appropriately integrate sexual orientation into the curriculum in a positive and constructive way, which enables both heterosexual and gay pupils to understand and respect difference and diversity.

# 7

### Use outside experience

Schools should work with external bodies such as Stonewall's Education Champions Programme, lesbian, gay and bisexual charities, local youth workers or local authorities who can help schools tackle homophobic bullying and offer support to individuals.

# 8

### Encourage role models

Positive role models help reduce bullying, provide support and make young people feel more confident and comfortable. Schools should ensure that gay members of staff feel comfortable and supported to be open about their sexual orientation. Lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers are in a strong position to fulfill this role provided they are supported by their schools.

# 9

### Don't make assumptions

Schools should know, where possible, the backgrounds of their students, remembering that everyone and every family is different and that many young people will have gay family members and friends.

# 10

### Celebrate achievements

Acknowledge and celebrate progress so that parents, governors, pupils and staff understand and are aware of the progress being made in the school's efforts to tackle homophobia.

## What the law says

New Government legislation means that schools now have to be proactive in preventing homophobic bullying and make all children and young people feel included. The Public Duty requires all public bodies, including schools and academies, to eradicate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations – this means preventing and tackling homophobic bullying and language and talking about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in schools.

## Education Champions Programme

Stonewall's Education Champions Programme provides bespoke support and guidance to local authorities in tackling homophobia

and homophobic bullying with their local schools. Local authorities work with Stonewall and each other to establish ways to address homophobic bullying and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment for all young people. For more information visit [www.stonewall.org.uk/educationchampions](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/educationchampions)

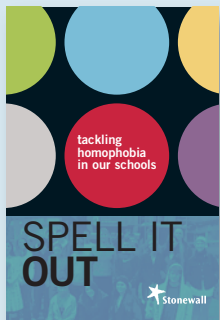
## We'd like to hear from you!

Tell us what you think about Stonewall's resources, order materials and find out how you can get more involved in our work. visit [www.stonewall.org.uk/atschool/secondary](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/atschool/secondary) email [education@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:education@stonewall.org.uk) or call 08000 50 20 20

## Further resources at [www.stonewall.org.uk/educationresources](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/educationresources)

'Always excellent quality, practical, and with interesting and attractive designs that make young people and adults want to use them.' Sue, secondary school teacher

'We showed *FIT* to every class and it was like someone had waved a magic wand. The students were engaged from the second it started and now realise how using the word "gay" in a derogatory way is wrong and offensive and we have drastically reduced the homophobic language in one swoop! Absolutely amazing resource for schools!' Claire, Citizenship coordinator



*Spell It Out* – secondary school staff training DVD



*FIT* – Stonewall's feature-film for secondary schools



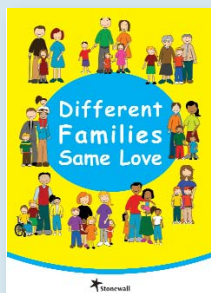
'Oh no! Not the gay thing!' – a pack with ideas on how to address lesbian, gay and bisexual issues throughout the curriculum



*Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!* posters, postcards and stickers



*Different families: the experiences of children with gay parents* (2010)



*Different Families* posters help schools to celebrate difference



*The School Report: the experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools* (2007) *The Teachers' Report* (2009) YouGov polling of over 2,000 primary and secondary school school staff about homophobic bullying



Education Guides: Including *Challenging homophobic language*, *Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people*, and *Including different families*