

## Report extract

# No place for bullying: case studies

Tackling and preventing prejudice-based bullying

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A wide range of research indicates that bullying is a problem for many young people, and that some of this takes place in schools. In the autumn term 2011 Ofsted carried out a survey, *No place for bullying*, to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions that schools take to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

Research evidence also indicates that there are groups of learners who are bullied disproportionately. These include disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and pupils who are, or are perceived to be, homosexual. This aspect was considered in all of the survey visits and inspectors found that some pupils had been the targets of bullying for these apparent reasons. In particular, inspectors found that language that discriminated against both of these groups of pupils, and others, was common in many of the schools visited. Many pupils were well aware that such language was not acceptable, but it was often seen as 'banter'. In contrast, staff were not always aware of the extent of its use, or themselves saw it as banter, so did not challenge it. Staff also indicated that they did not always feel confident to challenge or have the strategies to do so.

To extend this aspect of the survey, inspectors visited an additional four primary schools and five secondary schools that have specifically and successfully tackled prejudice-based attitudes and related bullying. These case studies are presented in this report extract.

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## Tackling prejudice related to homophobia

1. The first five case studies in this part of the survey focus on schools' actions to tackle aspects of homophobia and transphobia. The schools visited were all very different in size, location, pupil population and in their specialisms, yet there were strong common elements that featured in their practice. In these schools, homophobic and transphobic language, behaviour and attitudes were successfully tackled in the following ways.
  - **Acknowledging the problem.** The schools surveyed pupils, parents and carers, governors and staff, to identify whether homophobic terms such as 'gay' (in a derogatory sense), 'lez' or 'trannie' were prevalent, and considered whether there were other forms of bullying and behaviour that should also be tackled.
  - **Securing a commitment from all senior leaders.** In each school there was a strong vision, ethos and drive from senior leaders to tackle homophobic and transphobic conduct and language.
  - **Training for all staff.** All staff were involved and received the same training. This meant that lunchtime staff, site managers, learning mentors, teaching assistants and staff working in the front-of-house office all knew school policies and procedures and how to recognise, challenge and record this type of behaviour. As a result, staff became knowledgeable and confident about this aspect of their work.
  - **Updating policies and procedures.** All policies were reviewed and updated to ensure that they included lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils and, importantly, adults. Systems to safeguard pupils, such as training for the designated officer for child protection, and policies such as those for behaviour and anti-bullying policies were amended to ensure that staff had a good level of knowledge about tackling prejudice-based bullying. As a result, LGBT pupils felt protected and safe and improved their achievement.
  - **Tackling homophobic and transphobic language strongly.** Each school ensured that any use of such language, such as 'gay' as a derogatory term, was recorded and followed up. Incidents were taken seriously and could be reported anonymously to protect the pupils. Incidents were measured and evaluated frequently. Similarly, any anti-gay or anti-transgender attitudes were followed up and staff worked with pupils to change their perceptions. All of these schools were fearless in tackling prejudice-based behaviours and included parents and carers, governors and the community in helping to combat poor behaviour.
  - **Developing the curriculum to meet the needs of LGBT learners.** All of these schools reviewed their curricula and systems to ensure that they met the needs of these groups of pupils. They ensured that staff did not make assumptions about pupils' families and sexuality and included references to same-sex couples and families. They ensured that lessons,

books and topics covered all strands of diversity including sexuality and gender identity. Most schools used role models and resources provided by external organisations to create an inclusive culture within their schools. Displays, posters and information to visitors ensured that everyone entering the school knew about its values of respect for all forms of diversity. These schools did not single out sexuality or gender identity but ensured that the curriculum covered all types of diversity.

- **Creating a safe environment.** In these schools this combination of actions ensured that there was a high level of tolerance and safety for all members of the community. Consequently pupils, adults and teachers could feel safe in being 'out' or being themselves in school without fear of retribution.

The following case studies illustrate how this worked in practice in different settings.

### **Case study 1: Tackling homophobic language**

#### *The school's context*

2. The school is a fully comprehensive secondary school which converted to an academy in December 2011. It has increased in size in recent years and is larger than average. Most pupils are White British with small minorities from Indian and other Asian, Caribbean, African, Chinese, or mixed cultural heritages. There is a below-average percentage of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, though an average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

#### *Starting with pupils' experiences and views*

3. The views of pupils are important to the school. Pupil-led forums, such as the global justice group and the fair trade team, enable pupils to gain perspectives of different equality and diversity issues. In 2010, the senior leaders established a pupil diversity forum as a means of consulting pupils about equality and diversity issues at the school. Pupils in the forum identified a list of priorities, the first of which was to tackle inappropriate homophobic language which they felt was in common usage. They designed and distributed questionnaires and analysed the results. These identified that although 31% of pupils agreed there were 'rarely' any homophobic comments or name-calling, 41% disagreed and 28% strongly disagreed. This clearly confirmed the pupils' original view – that this was an issue that needed attention.

#### *Involving parents and carers from the outset*

4. Senior leaders invited parents and carers into the school to discuss equality and diversity issues and asked them to complete a questionnaire. The school talked through the pupils' findings about homophobic language and used this as a discussion point with parents and carers who supported and contributed to the

action plan to tackle homophobia. The consultation meeting was followed by newsletters and briefings on the school website. This ensured that parents and carers were involved in the campaign and was effective in enlisting their support from the outset.

### *Training and supporting staff*

5. Leaders created a staff 'diversity steering group' with the aim of engaging a cross-section of staff in reviewing and promoting issues of equality and diversity. All staff, including support staff and senior leaders, were trained in how to identify, record, report and tackle homophobia. The training was informed by external specialist resources such as those produced by Stonewall.<sup>1</sup> The school introduced and reinforced a 'zero-tolerance' policy of homophobic language. This consisted of identifying and recording all incidents that they heard, which initially caused an increase in recorded incidents. Staff investigated each incident and discussed the issues with the pupil to ensure that it was not repeated. Leaders ensured that staff who were new to the school and initial teacher training students were trained, as part of their induction, in how to tackle and report different types of prejudice-based bullying including racism and homophobia.

### *Communicating the message to all pupils*

6. Staff work together to give a consistent message to pupils. The behaviour codes are applied consistently and are well known to everyone. Strong systems are in place for pupils to report bullying and harassment. There is a confidential and anonymous reporting system and a secure text messaging system to report a problem or an issue. Pupils know that they can approach designated staff who will deal with all worries and concerns in confidentiality. This makes pupils feel safe and secure and listened to. Senior leaders and teachers use a proactive approach to tackling behaviour issues that ensures that the causes of bullying and prejudice are tackled, rather than just reacted to when they arise. As a consequence of these actions, staff and pupils are extremely accepting of each other. The school environment is one in which pupils support each other and feel confident in being themselves, knowing that they are valued for their differences.
7. As part of the campaign against homophobia, staff discussed with pupils the idea that heterosexual people do not need to 'come out as straight', raising the question as to why lesbian, gay or bisexual people are expected to 'come out as gay' rather than just being themselves. This emphasis, in addition to the open, tolerant, safe and inclusive environment in the school means that pupils and staff feel confident and safe enough to be themselves and to be 'out' in school if they wish. A 'prom couple' recently nominated by the pupils was a same-sex couple.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk).

### *Amending the curriculum*

8. Another key to the success of the strategy was to amend and enhance the curriculum to teach openly about lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) issues alongside other aspects of equality and diversity. Through the school's specialist language college status pupils gained a thorough understanding of different countries and people in the world. International school days and the global emphasis breeds tolerance in pupils of differences in people around the world. The school has gained Level 3 of the Stephen Lawrence award.<sup>2</sup> Pupils' understanding of the full range of equality and diversity issues has been a factor in improving their achievement and knowledge.
9. In 2010, staff organised a diversity festival which looked at three strands of diversity: disability, faith and sexuality. Among other activities, pupils learnt sign language, learnt about Hinduism in workshops, and learnt about the damage homophobia can cause. As a part of the festival, all staff engaged in the 'Some people are gay, get over it' campaign.<sup>3</sup> During the week, staff took turns to wear T-shirts displaying the anti-homophobia slogan, posters were placed in every room and around the school, and workshops were introduced aimed at eradicating homophobia by indicating to pupils the damage it causes. Positive reports in the local media celebrated the school's attempts to promote different strands of diversity.
10. The curriculum was also enhanced to ensure that pupils across the school had more frequent opportunities to learn about LGB issues. In Year 9, pupils watched a visiting theatre production *Boxed In*, which tackled issues around homophobia, Year 10 pupils watched the Stonewall DVD *FIT*,<sup>4</sup> produced for secondary schools, and a representative of Pride Games<sup>5</sup> visited the school to lead sports activities for a day and to discuss stereotyping and prejudice-based language. Role models were invited into school to discuss homophobia. Sir Ian McKellen spent half a day speaking to staff, pupils and governors and provided an insight into homophobia, the damage it causes and how it hinders achievement. The English department has introduced texts which allude to sexuality and the sixth form completed a project on 'new queer cinema'.<sup>6</sup>

### *The impact of strong leadership*

11. Key to the success of the strategy to reduce homophobic language was the outstanding vision, drive, passion and commitment of senior leaders to create a harmonious school community in which differences are valued and pupils show

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<sup>2</sup> [www.educationleeds.co.uk/sles](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/sles).

<sup>3</sup> [www.stonewall.org.uk/at\\_school/education\\_for\\_all/quick\\_links/education\\_resources/4007.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4007.asp).

<sup>4</sup> [www.stonewall.org.uk/at\\_school/fit/default.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/fit/default.asp).

<sup>5</sup> [www.pridegames.org/register/index.php](http://www.pridegames.org/register/index.php).

<sup>6</sup> [www.newqueercinema.com](http://www.newqueercinema.com).

high levels of tolerance for others. Another key factor in its success was the involvement and commitment of all staff and governors. A year later, after implementing a very well-constructed action plan and strategy, pupils were surveyed again and the results indicated a marked decrease in the use of homophobic language.

## **Case study 2: Moving beyond stereotypes and embracing diversity**

### *The school's context*

12. The school in this case study is a larger than average primary school. Approximately a third of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with a small number at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is below average. In September 2011, the number of Reception classes increased from two to three.

### *Identifying the issue*

13. Approximately five years ago, the school identified the issue of sexuality as a weaker aspect of the whole-school policy on inclusion. Staff had noticed some homophobic language in the playground and wanted to understand better how to tackle this area of discrimination. The school had a high level of awareness of the effect that bullying and feelings of exclusion have on self-esteem and consequently on achievement. Their concerns about the negative impact of the casual use of 'gay' as a term of derision led to a series of well-planned actions. These included training for staff, working with pupils to extend their understanding, and altering the curriculum.

### *Altering perceptions*

14. The school decided to seek some external support to help them with the changes they wanted to make. They invited a charity called 'Sexyuality'<sup>7</sup> to deliver two training sessions for teachers. The charity's workers took the staff through the materials and activities the group was planning to carry out with Key Stage 2 pupils and introduced them to a range of resources, including picture books suitable for the Early Years Foundation Stage. One of the workers was struck by the way that the school was 'open to celebrating diversity' and 'not fearful'.
15. Senior leaders also invited the Cambridge Race Equality and Diversity Service to support staff in their desire to extend the social and emotional aspects of learning curriculum and to make the wider curriculum more diverse and inclusive of LGBT people. All teachers, teaching assistants and lunchtime

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<sup>7</sup> Sexyuality is an LGBT charity based in Cambridge. They work mainly in secondary schools where young members act as mentors and lead workshops.



supervisors received training on dealing with homophobic incidents. Staff were clear that their training had taught them that 'homophobic bullying does not just affect gay people but anyone who is perceived to be gay or different in any way'.

16. The school was keen to ensure that its pupils extended their understanding, and were confident to celebrate difference. As part of this, pupils were filmed talking about their families for the Stonewall *Different families* video.<sup>8</sup> A teaching assistant talked to pupils, with pride, about her son who is gay, offering an example of positive parenting. This was also filmed for future use.
17. The school also considered how its policies needed to be strengthened to reflect this work. Leaders ensured that the anti-bullying policy was inclusive of all protected groups and was overt about homophobic bullying as well as all other types. They included quotes from a range of relevant Education Acts and ministerial guidance to reinforce their messages.<sup>9</sup> The behaviour management policy stated clearly that one of the core values is 'celebrating each other's differences'. The school's single equality policy is also overt and includes, as part of teachers' roles and responsibilities, 'dealing with homophobic incidents; promoting good community relations; avoiding discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and monitoring homophobic incidents'.

#### *The school five years on*

18. Five years on, LGBT as an aspect of diversity is well embedded in the curriculum. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, picture books include different families, including those with LGBT relationships, and people in non-stereotypical roles.<sup>10</sup> In Year 5, pupils spend project week looking at how stories and illustrations have changed in children's books over the past 50 years. Through this they explore issues of racism, gender stereotyping and homophobia. At the end of the week pupils make their own storybooks depicting difference and diversity in all its forms and this often illustrates their good understanding and positive attitudes, as well as their enjoyment in their work. One girl, for example, wrote a fairy story which ended with two princesses marrying each other. In Year 6 personal, social and health education lessons pupils explore homophobia and stereotyping in the media and learn about gay role models such as actor Sir Ian McKellen and international rugby

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<sup>8</sup> [www.stonewall.org.uk/media/current\\_releases/3966.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/media/current_releases/3966.asp).

<sup>9</sup> Such as *Stand up for us: challenging homophobia in schools*, Health Development Agency, 2004; [www.nice.org.uk/aboutnice/whoweare/aboutthehda/hdapublications/stand\\_up\\_for\\_us\\_challenging\\_homophobia\\_in\\_schools.jsp](http://www.nice.org.uk/aboutnice/whoweare/aboutthehda/hdapublications/stand_up_for_us_challenging_homophobia_in_schools.jsp).

<sup>10</sup> For example, J Richardson and P Parnell, *And tango makes three*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2005; L de Haan and S Nijland, *King & King*, Tricycle Press, Berkeley, 2002.

player Gareth Thomas. Stonewall posters of different families are on display in the school.

19. This work has a lasting effect on pupils' understanding and attitudes, as illustrated by the Year 8 pupils who returned to the school to discuss their learning while there. They spoke enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the Year 5 and Year 6 lessons, and about the work they did on homophobia during anti-bullying weeks.
20. The school's work has helped pupils to be comfortable to behave in a non-gender-stereotypical way. Teachers report that in the Early Years Foundation Stage in particular many boys dress up in girls' clothes from the dressing-up box and one boy wears his hair long with a ribbon and no one ever teases them. A Year 1 boy sometimes wears a tutu all day without comment from his peers. Pupils are confident to speak about what they like to do, for example boys are happy to say so if they prefer cheerleading to football. The school choir and the sewing club both include plenty of boys and many girls play football. Parents and carers are aware that pupils unselfconsciously engage in non-gender stereotypical activities at school and are supportive of the school's approach, reporting that the school has a 'really inclusive feel'. The welcoming environment for all pupils and their families was illustrated by a pupil's comment that 'everyone should be proud of themselves'.
21. Leaders and staff are pleased that since tackling this issue with staff and pupils, homophobic language is hardly ever heard. Pupils are very comfortable using the terms 'gay' and 'lesbian' appropriately in conversation. One pupil explained how, following an incident when a girl in Year 3 was upset at being called a lesbian, the teacher dealt with the issue in circle time, explaining that it was unkind to call people names but there was also nothing wrong in being a lesbian. The pupils thought that such an incident was unlikely to happen now, because they all understand the importance of not being homophobic. As one pupil put it: 'Being gay is nothing to be scared of.'

### **Case study 3: Tackling ingrained attitudes in a school community**

#### *The school's context*

22. This school is a larger than average-sized high school in the centre of London. It has specialist status for media, arts, science, mathematics and inclusion. There is a wide range of ethnicities and faiths in the school. About one third of pupils do not speak English as their first language and around 50 pupils are refugees and asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is slightly above average and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is almost double the national average. An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

### *A serious problem*

23. Senior leaders and staff report that prior to 2005, homophobic language in the school was rife and many pupils had anti-gay attitudes. Intimidation and harassment were also issues at times. Three teachers, all heterosexual, told inspectors about their past experiences. One described how he felt intimidated by Year 11 pupils standing outside his room and following him down corridors shouting homophobic language. Another explained how when he introduced a Year 10 assembly which mentioned the words 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'bisexual', some pupils shouted out homophobic language throughout the assembly. A third teacher told how when she walked down the corridor she frequently heard pupils using terms such as 'batty man', 'queer', 'gay' and 'poof' to each other and did not feel that this was being tackled.

### *Getting started*

24. The starting point was securing the commitment from all senior leaders to tackle the problem. In 2005, the diversity leader started working with Year 7 on a programme of tackling homophobic language and bullying. Through the curriculum she introduced links in lessons to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and diversity issues. The decision was made to tackle the problem thoroughly over five years, starting with each cohort as they joined and continuing as they moved through the school. First, she trained all teaching and non-teaching staff to ensure that everyone knew what to do to tackle homophobic language. Not all of the teachers were supportive at that point. Three refused to take part and tried to undermine this drive for improvement, citing reasons such as 'being gay is unnatural', and 'being gay is a lifestyle choice'. Pupils also responded to the input in various ways, not all of which were positive. A few pupils even walked out of the assemblies when the subject of lesbian, gay and bisexual people was raised. Nevertheless, the diversity leader, backed by senior colleagues and supported by the overwhelming majority of staff, persisted. Throughout this period the determination to tackle prejudice-based bullying was paramount.

### *Extending the curriculum*

25. Key to the school's success was ensuring that LGBT issues were covered in the curriculum. In this way, senior leaders felt, it would not be a one-off event or a sticking plaster on the problem. They were determined that inclusion and the eradication of prejudice would be rooted within the school's systems, procedures and curriculum. The diversity coordinator led training for all teachers and heads of department to help them to amend the curriculum to take account of sexuality and gender identity. In addition, the curriculum was enhanced by diversity weeks and days to celebrate individual differences and to ensure that each subject met the needs of pupils who are LGB and those who may be transgender. This approach has been highly successful. In art, for example, pupils evaluate the work of Grayson Perry; in information and communication technology, pupils study the life and impact of Alan Turing; and

in history, when studying the Holocaust, pupils look at the impact on groups such as Gypsies and LGB people. Sex and relationships education is very strong because it ensures that each group of pupils is catered for, including LGBT pupils, and has a strong emphasis on how to be safe.

### *Using external role models*

26. To support its work, the school brought in external role models. These were carefully selected to meet identified needs and were often targeted at particular groups of pupils. For example, a group of Black Caribbean heritage girls were identified as being homophobic in their attitudes and frequently using homophobic language. The school arranged for a Black lesbian rap artist to perform to the whole school but then to work with this group of pupils. As a result, their attitudes, behaviour and language changed to be more respectful and understanding of LGB people. Similarly, the school arranged a visit from a gay Muslim group to come to speak to the school and to become mentors to Muslim pupils as needed. As a result, pupils who are or may be LGBT have rising attendance and achievement. The dual approach of bringing in role models and of curriculum coverage has resulted in pupils' strong awareness of how different groups have contributed and still contribute to society.

### *Involving the wider community*

27. Another key element of the school's success in tackling homophobic bullying has been the involvement of stakeholders and community. Parents and carers were kept informed throughout the initiative via newsletters and posts on the very informative website, and their views were sought through questionnaires and forums. No parent or carer objected or complained. Governors were informed and involved. The Chair of Governors was fully supportive of the initiative and insisted it was a part of their role under the 2010 Equality Act. The school involved the press in publicising positive stories about the initiatives and its impact in reducing prejudice-based bullying.
28. The police were also involved. Before the initiative the police had received frequent complaints from the public in the park adjacent to the school about pupils' behaviour and homophobic language and taunts. The police officer linked to the school told inspectors that complaints of this nature related to pupils at the school have ceased, in contrast to the situation in neighbouring parts of the borough. He was highly complimentary about the impact of the initiative in the community. Another simple but highly effective action that the school took was to enhance the behaviour referral forms to include reference to homophobic language. This meant that all staff would look out for, record and report issues as they arose. Where necessary, this also meant that the police could take the forms and see whether action needed to be taken. This joint work with the police was highly effective.
29. The school is outward looking and outward thinking. It takes a strong lead on this issue with other schools in the borough, its feeder schools, Hackney

Learning Trust, the local church, government departments and national agencies. Teachers write lesson plans which cover LGBT issues, which are then collated by the diversity coordinator and put on to the website for teachers across the world to access. The school's practice has been commended and rewarded by a number of national and local bodies and agencies. The school provides professional development opportunities for other teachers, support staff, local authorities and teacher training providers.

*The outcome of the school's work*

30. A significant outcome of the school's work has been the confidence of LGBT staff and pupils to be themselves and to be open about their sexuality without fear of reprisals or harassment. Overall, the school has become a much more cohesive and inclusive community and there has been a significant decrease in most forms of bullying. Although LGBT is a strong focus it does not dominate over other forms of bullying such as racism. By focusing on it, pupils have applied their thinking to many other groups within society.

**Case study 4: Creating an inclusive community from the outset**

*The school's context*

31. At this small infants' school, a number of parents and carers of pupils are in same-sex relationships. In Reception in particular around a quarter of the children have same-sex relationships in some part of their family. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average. Almost all pupils are White British. The school hosts the local authority's autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) provision, which accommodates up to six pupils. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is broadly average, and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.

*Setting the tone and maintaining consistency*

32. The senior leaders have created a school with an open-minded, accepting and inclusive atmosphere. There is a strong drive to promote and cater for all forms of diversity that begins even before children take up their places at the school. An example of the inclusive atmosphere is the excellent work the school does with pupils who are or may be transgender. Transgender pupils are taken seriously. Staff consult parents and carers fully and take steps to ensure that the pupils are able to thrive and achieve as well as they can. This involves a high level of tolerance, empathy and support. The school appreciates that a boy may prefer to be known as a girl and have a girl's name and similarly a girl may have a girl's name but wants to dress as and be a boy. Where this is the case, staff liaise closely with each other and with parents and carers and take successful steps to ensure that the pupil is fully included in the activities and can be themselves. This individualised approach extends to after-school clubs

and activities, where the school also sometimes supports transgender pupils from other schools.

33. Staff, parents, carers and pupils confirm that prejudice-based bullying and inappropriate comments about pupils' families are exceptionally rare. Key to the school's success in promoting positive behaviour and in preventing bullying, harassment and intimidation is the very clear vision of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. However, these senior leaders do not work in isolation. The involvement and commitment of the whole staff are further reasons for the school's success. All staff, including lunchtime staff and teaching assistants, have received information about and training in how to deal with homophobic language and how to work positively with different families. The training they have received, combined with full commitment from all adults, ensures consistency of approach and means that whichever adults are in school on a given day, the message of openness and tolerance is the same.

*The importance of relationships with families*

34. Another key to the success of the school's work is the staff's detailed knowledge of its community. This begins with home visits before the child starts at the school. During these, staff establish what parents and carers would like to be called and known as by staff at the school. For example, some children prefix each of their parent's names with 'Mum' or 'Dad', for example 'Mum Pat' and 'Mum Dawn'. The school then passes this and other information to all staff, who consistently use the same terminology. This enables the team of staff who work in the office, for example, to welcome and include all parents and carers without making assumptions about pupils' families. As a result, same-sex families are treated the same as those with any other relationships; all parents and carers feel included in their children's school; and terminology is used consistently across the school.
35. Communication with families is strong, frequent and effective. The school ensures that all that their communications convey respect and value to all types of families. For example, they send out 'family' questionnaires rather than 'parent' questionnaires, thus including all carers and encompassing families that may consist of two fathers and two mothers as well as heterosexual parents and carers. The school uses a wide range of communication methods to ensure that parents and carers feel informed, are involved in tackling any inappropriate behaviour and feel a part of the school ethos. One response to a family questionnaire said:

We appreciate the effort that the school makes to create an open inclusive environment that is accepting of diversity. We feel confident that if any issues were to come up, for example homophobia, from anyone in the school, that it would be dealt with appropriately and sensitively and our daughter would be supported throughout the incident.

### *Pupils' behaviour*

36. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is extremely positive. This is because there is a comprehensive and consistently applied behaviour management system in place which rewards tolerance, kindness, friendliness and a willingness to 'have a try'. Pupils know that bullying and behaviours such as the use of homophobic language are wrong and have been shown the impact it can have on others' feelings and achievement. One of the successful behavioural strategies in place is based on 'I feel, I think, I choose'. This ensures that pupils continuously reflect on their feelings and are encouraged to make positive choices. Children in Reception have a 'thinking spot' where they can go to reflect about how they are feeling and the actions they have chosen.

### *Embracing and celebrating difference*

37. Social and emotional aspects of learning are at the heart of the curriculum and the school takes a lead role on this within the local authority. Diversity and inclusion are threaded through the curriculum. Staff have consulted same-sex parents and carers and involved Stonewall to identify resources that could be used effectively in the school.<sup>11</sup> Books and resources include a range of different families. For example, teachers use a book in lessons and assemblies entitled *Imagine the difference*.<sup>12</sup> The impact of this approach on pupils is significant because it ensures that same-sex relationships are seen as normal and 'no big deal'. Posters and pictures around the school, leaflets and images are selected to reflect the full range of families. This enables pupils to feel that the school and the curriculum are meaningful and apply to them. This, in turn, helps them to achieve.
38. Staff are careful with their language in class to ensure that all pupils feel involved. They work hard not to make assumptions about families. When making mothers' day cards for example, pupils can opt to make as many cards as they need and can send them to someone at home or someone else they are close to. Equally, the staff are unafraid to tackle potentially controversial issues. For example, in one lesson about families a boy chose to tell the class that he had 'no father' because he was born from frozen sperm and had two mums. Another pupil from a heterosexual Christian family in the same lesson did not understand how this could happen and did not believe there could be a family without a father. The teacher abandoned the lesson and created an alternative lesson about different families to ensure that all pupils, regardless of background, were valued. The teacher then discussed the lesson with parents and carers at the end of the day.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.stonewall.org.uk/at\\_school](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school).

<sup>12</sup> [www.scope.org.uk/help-and-information/publications/imagine-difference](http://www.scope.org.uk/help-and-information/publications/imagine-difference).

## Case study 5: Equality and diversity in a faith-based context

### *The school's context*

39. The school that features in this case study is a Christian co-educational day and boarding school with over 1,300 pupils including 120 boarders and a sixth form of 400 pupils. The school was established over 100 years ago as one of the first co-educational independent boarding schools. It is now a non-denominational voluntary aided school in the Hertfordshire local authority. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals is low.

### *The starting point*

40. Alongside their legal responsibilities, the school sees it as very much their Christian duty to tackle all forms of bullying, based on the principle of 'everyone has the right to be themselves'. The school considered which groups of pupils might be vulnerable to poor experiences and outcomes, and as part of this, reviewed how far it was a supportive environment for students or staff who are or may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. They decided that homophobic language in the classroom was not being dealt with as seriously or consistently as other forms of prejudice-based language. To begin to remedy this, the deputy headteacher contacted Stonewall for help and advice. A meeting with Stonewall was followed by a programme of staff training and the revisiting of school policies.

### *The actions taken*

41. All teaching staff were trained in how to tackle homophobia, particularly homophobic language. Induction training for new teaching staff and initial teacher education students addresses the issue and makes expectations clear from the outset. Teaching assistants and other staff are well briefed.
42. The school also recognised the need to address LGBT issues in the curriculum. The deputy headteacher made available to staff the latest Stonewall curriculum materials and is encouraging them to 'think about opportunities' and use them accordingly – the policy is for gradual and natural integration of LGBT issues into lessons and this is working well. LGBT issues are often raised in religious education and PSHE lessons, and PSHE teaching rooms include displays about different sexualities.
43. Displays around the school reinforce the 'respect for diversity' message. Pupil notice boards include telephone numbers and places to go for advice and help for young LGBT people. These also appear in the pupils' 'prep' books which they carry around with them at all times.
44. Current policies are well considered. The anti-bullying, discipline and equal opportunities policies all cohere well. They include examples of good practice, for example how teachers can challenge gender stereotyping and how the



curriculum can reflect cultural diversity. Homophobic bullying and language are taken as seriously as any other form of bullying or prejudiced-based language. The school is aware that they have yet to address transgender issues in policies or training and are reflecting on this aspect.

### *Working with others to extend understanding*

45. The school makes excellent use of outside expertise which is greatly valued by the pupils. Sir Ian McKellen gave out awards and made a speech highlighting LGBT issues at the school's prize-giving evening, and Year 9 pupils met with and were addressed by a gay naval officer. The school expected a backlash following press reports of Sir Ian McKellen's visit. Only one parent complained but they did receive 12 angry letters from the wider public. However, the chaplain and the governors (including one leader of a local evangelical church) are fully supportive of the school's stance on tackling homophobic bullying and of the inclusion of LGBT in their policies. Combined with good support from the senior leadership team, this has been pivotal in ensuring that the school can continue to take this strong stance and develop their work further.

### *The impact on pupils*

46. The school has a very positive social environment. A long-established house system with vertical tutoring is cited by the pupils as the biggest aid to tackling all forms of bullying. Older pupils take care of younger pupils and all feel well protected by the 'house' where they are well known. Pupils say that bullying is rare also because there are always teachers and prefects around and during lunchtimes and after school there are many activities catering for a wide range of interests so that no one is left feeling isolated and vulnerable to bullying.
47. The school's work on this issue has meant that pupils are aware that prejudice-based language is wrong and why it is wrong. Pupils explained that the personal stories of LGBT visitors to the school and the video clips they had seen in assemblies of gay American pupils discussing their experiences of bullying brought home to them the seriousness of homophobia. They said that, like racist language, homophobic language was almost never heard in the classroom nowadays and its use had reduced, though not yet ceased, during informal times.
48. Since widening the school's equal opportunities work to be more inclusive of LGBT issues, several pupils and some staff have 'come out' as LGBT and say they feel supported in school.

## **Tackling prejudice related to disability**

49. The following case studies focus on schools' actions to ensure the inclusion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and to extend pupils' understanding of disability generally. Two schools serving very different

communities are both highly successful in creating a culture that acknowledges, accepts and celebrates difference. This case study compares their approaches and analyses the common strands.

## **Case study 6: Creating an inclusive culture – contrasting approaches**

### *The two schools' contexts*

50. School A is a slightly larger than average primary school with two nurseries and a children's centre serving an inner-city community in London. School B is an average-sized primary school serving a rural community in the north of England. Nearly all children and their families at School B speak English as their first language. School A has a very diverse population with a large number of different languages spoken by the children and their families. It also has a higher than average proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, whereas School B has a lower proportion.

### *Philosophy and approaches*

51. The two schools appear to be very different in a number of ways. Staff and children at School A use first names throughout, whereas School B uses more formal forms of address, using titles and surnames for adults in all situations. Children at School B wear school uniform; children at School A do not.
52. Both schools are highly committed to providing an outstanding education for as many children in their area as possible. They make specific reference to being inclusive communities in their aims. They are explicit about actively promoting children's physical, intellectual, emotional, social, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual development, and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

### *Communicating expectations*

53. The rules and expectations in the two schools are presented in very different ways, but in both, pupils have a very good understanding of them. They know why they are relevant and they understand their own responsibilities for upholding the rules and how these therefore contribute to a harmonious community. School B has a short-list of positive rules.

- Always try your best.
- Be friendly and polite.
- Care for others and the environment.
- Work hard.

School A has a longer list of more explicit rules outlining desired and unacceptable behaviour.

- Do as the adults ask. Do not ignore the adults.

- Do respect everyone's body and feelings. Don't hurt anyone's body and feelings.
- Do listen well. Don't interrupt.
- Do sit calmly and quietly. Don't fidget.
- Do call each other by the proper name. Don't call each other unkind names.
- Do be kind when others make mistakes. Don't laugh when others make mistakes.
- Do tell adults things that concern you. Don't tell nasty tales.
- Do be truthful. Don't tell lies.
- Do walk. Don't run.
- Do talk. Don't shout.
- Do be polite. Don't be rude.
- Do play safely. Don't play rough games.
- Do line up one behind the other without touching. Don't push or talk in lines.
- Do sit quietly in assembly. Don't talk in assembly.
- Do take care of property. Don't damage property.

### *The keys to success*

54. Although there are many apparent differences between the two schools, both are highly successful in creating a culture that acknowledges, accepts and celebrates difference. They are both effective in tackling bullying and harassment, particularly around disability. Both schools give a very high priority to ensuring that there is a harmonious community based on mutual respect and dignity for all members of the school community. The keys to success in both of these schools may be summarised as follows.
- There is an explicit stated philosophy of inclusion where difference and diversity are acknowledged and celebrated.
  - Strong leadership, including the governing body, ensures that the stated aims become a reality and are closely monitored and evaluated.
  - All staff share a strong belief in the philosophy and aims of the school.
  - Excellent staff training enables all staff to be consistent when implementing the rules and explaining the school code of conduct to all members of the community.
  - There is a greater focus on celebrating achievement and rewarding positive behaviour than implementing sanctions.

- Staff are alert to even the smallest indication of anyone treating another person in a disrespectful way, no matter how unintentional, including any behaviour that isolates pupils from a group. These situations are addressed quickly and recorded diligently.
- The schools acknowledge issues of prejudice and disrespect in the wider community and actively seek ways to ensure that pupils are taught about discrimination and the poor attitudes experienced by some people. They help give pupils opportunities to learn different appropriate strategies to deal with situations where people may bully or be unpleasant to them or others.
- The schools ensure that the curriculum is designed to address disability issues and pupils' understanding of diversity. They involve visiting speakers and staff who provide positive role models of disability as well as other aspects of diversity.

The schools in the final three case studies also share the characteristics outlined above.

### **Case study 7: A school for all of its community**

#### *The school's context*

55. This school is a specialist technology college offering comprehensive education for pupils aged between 11 and 16 in an urban area of the West Midlands. The school hosts specialist provision for pupils with hearing impairment, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, pupils with complex communication difficulties and pupils with specific learning difficulties. The school has a much higher than average proportion of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs than other schools nationally.

#### *Creating a culture that accepts and celebrates difference*

56. There is a long-established philosophy that the school, as a community secondary school, should be able to provide a good education for the vast majority of young people in the local area. To this end the leadership team has created a strong ethos where the school provision, if at all possible, is adapted to meet the needs of any local young person who wishes to attend.
57. The senior leadership and staff team clearly articulate a vision that helps to maintain an inclusive community where diversity is celebrated. This commitment is made explicit to parents and carers and to pupils, and as a result there is significant success in ensuring that pupils feel that they belong to a welcoming and supportive community. Pupils attending any of the specialist provisions are an integral part of the school. They spend most of their time in the main school classes and are full members of mixed tutor groups, having access to specialist teaching and support as required. Pupils are proud to be part of an inclusive community and are strong advocates for each other.

### *Staff training*

58. The commitment and involvement of all staff are further reasons for success. Staff recruitment and training are based upon an expectation that all staff at the school may at some time teach or support any pupil who attends the school, including those who are disabled. Coaching, training and information for staff are designed to ensure they can meet the needs of all students and are alert to any prejudice or harassment.

### *The involvement of families*

59. Parents and carers of disabled pupils are extremely positive about the experience their children have at the school. They believe that a key to the school's successful culture is that the inclusive ethos is backed up by careful attention to detail so that every member of staff is aware not only of the needs but also the experiences of the pupils they are teaching. From initial meetings about transition from primary school, parents and carers feel included in a team approach to the education of their child. Regular and detailed communication enables parents and carers to alert the school to any concerns that may arise and vice versa.

### *Understanding and being open about difference*

60. Pupils and staff learn about disability and the impact that this may have on a person's life. There is a culture of openness and discussion. The staff team actively help pupils to understand the needs of different people in their community and staff are very willing and competent to answer questions about disability. This positive focus on individual difference helps everyone in the school understand how they can support each other to ensure that all pupils can succeed.

### *High expectations of behaviour*

61. The behaviour expected from all members of the school community is based on an acknowledgement of difference and respect for all. These expectations are explicitly communicated. The behaviours that are not tolerated by the school are also made explicit, giving pupils confidence to address some of these issues between themselves. For those who do not abide by the expectations for behaviour there are clear sanctions, and carefully tailored support is also provided. Pupils and staff are not complacent. There is careful monitoring of behaviour incidents and bullying, including name-calling and any low level disrespectful behaviour or derogatory language. This diligence ensures that any emerging patterns can be picked up quickly and the pupils involved can be supported in the correct way. Pupils, staff and parents and carers confirm that bullying and inappropriate comments related to disability are extremely rare at the school but if they do arise they are always addressed.

## Case study 8: 'We all belong'

### *The school's context*

62. This case study features a large primary school with approximately 500 pupils on roll. Around two thirds of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The school hosts a resourced provision for the local authority, which has on roll 13 pupils who have significant physical and learning difficulties. A further 14 pupils with complex needs also attend the school because their parents or carers have chosen it. The school was built so that it could include pupils with a range of physical disabilities. It has a hydrotherapy pool, soft play area and specialist therapy facilities. Pupils with complex needs spend most of their time in the main school classes and have access to specialist teaching and support as required.

### *Setting the tone for inclusion*

63. The school has clearly defined values, and true inclusion is at the heart of these. The vision statement asserts that 'through our collaborative venture everyone is part of something unique and significant' and this is translated for pupils into the motto 'We all belong'. The school is a strong community that, through its routines, curriculum and teaching, demonstrates that it values everyone. As one pupil put it, 'This school makes everyone count.'
64. The strong, motivating reward system and consistent management of behaviour are key factors in maintaining a calm and purposeful environment. Whatever the pupils' needs, there are always high expectations of all pupils and an emphasis on 'fairness'. Pupils also have high expectations of their own behaviour and that of others, for example pupils explained clearly that everyone has the 'right' to join in with games and should be treated with the same 'respect in every way'. In discussions pupils said that being unkind or bullying of pupils who are disabled or who have special needs would not be tolerated. The school gives pupils a range of additional responsibilities. Particularly effective are the peer mediators who are trained to help sort out disagreements. This means that issues are sorted out quickly without relying on adults.

### *Developing friendships and collaboration*

65. Many interesting activities enable pupils to work together, not just in their own classes but with pupils of different ages. In the playground there is a daily programme of games to play such as Jenga, basketball or football. Nominated adults lead the activity, but pupils who are sports leaders support the games and have a good understanding of how to adapt games or remind other pupils of the rules in order to include those who are disabled or have special needs. Frequent special events such as art or science weeks, Black History month, or anti-bullying week involve pupils of different ages and with different needs in working together. Residential trips and educational visits include all pupils and

careful risk assessments are carried out to make sure that they are made suitable for disabled pupils and those with special needs. Pupils are very clear that these occasions are important as they make new friends in the rest of the school. When disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs go to the soft play room, sensory room or hydrotherapy pool they have the chance to choose a friend to go with and play and work alongside, which everyone enjoys.

#### *Getting the practical aspects right*

66. Routines are smooth and the school works calmly and efficiently. Spaces are set aside for the large specialist equipment and resources that are part of the school's everyday provision. Parallel or different learning activities for those who have more difficulties take place alongside other pupils, or separately when this is appropriate. Some amendments have been made to routines: for example, the lunch break is extended for some, so that pupils who need assistance can eat without being rushed. This practical, flexible approach produces a very matter-of-fact approach to disability. When asked, other pupils can explain about those who have additional needs, their equipment or special activities, but at the same time, they see pupils with special educational needs as their peers, the pupils they joined the school with, members of their class or their school community. One pupil said, 'They're not special needs people – it's all just us.'

#### *Celebrating achievement for all*

67. Celebration and valuing achievement are important factors in the school's life. Opportunities to have lunch at the 'VIP table' are enjoyed by all pupils who have earned this privilege. The awards of gold, silver and bronze certificates to individuals have a high status and are highlights for pupils. Families are invited to the special reward assemblies, which everyone enjoys. When the school recognised that this general award scheme was not successful enough in recognising the achievements of those with special needs they quickly changed it so that everyone's achievements are now equally recognised and valued. All pupils are members of a house team and are awarded team points throughout the day. This system is successful in valuing all pupils' achievement and their contribution to the success of a larger group.

#### *Teaching about diversity and difference*

68. The curriculum has a strong emphasis on diversity and difference. Personal, social and health education and social and emotional aspects of learning are supplemented by Philosophy for Children which means that pupils have regular opportunities to listen to each other; to formulate opinions, test them out and

reflect on them; and to question their own perceptions and stereotypes.<sup>13</sup> The combination of these approaches is successful. Pupils are reflective and empathetic. They speak a great deal about trying to understand what it is like to 'be in someone else's shoes'. Different cultures and festivals are celebrated frequently. The school holds an annual multi-cultural event when families' cultures are celebrated through food, costume and music. Teachers ensure that issues such as the Holocaust and refugees are discussed openly. Topics such as 'Vikings' give opportunities to discuss invasion and power in today's world. The curriculum includes the study of a range of people from different backgrounds, including those who are disabled, for example Stevie Wonder, Benjamin Zephaniah, Michael Morpurgo, Helen Keller, Elizabeth Fry and Mary Seacole.

69. The school has also introduced special awareness days to focus on aspects of disability. Recently the school held a day on visual impairment, where pupils took part in different sensory activities and had opportunities to complete tasks with simulated restricted vision. An adult with visual difficulties visited the school and spoke to the pupils. There were many benefits. Staff learned more. Pupils enjoyed the challenges and spoke positively about the day. They learned about Braille and reflected on a blind person's day-to-day experience. They gained new knowledge, including the fact that some impairments are lifelong which is the case for many pupils at the school. Three such days are planned for each year. In addition the school has also held 'signalong days' so that all pupils can increase their knowledge of sign language, which some pupils use as a main part of their communication.

### **Case study 9: Celebrating diversity and pursuing excellence for all**

#### *The school's context*

70. This school is a comprehensive school for approximately 1,000 pupils aged 11 to 16. The school also receives additional resources to provide education for pupils with physical and sensory disabilities and for pupils with specific learning difficulties. The school has had a specialism for the performing arts for many years and runs a working theatre. It is located on a campus shared with a primary school and a special school for pupils with severe and profound learning disabilities.

#### *Establishing a clear sense of belonging and commitment to the school community*

71. The school has been inclusive for many years and has a philosophy of celebrating diversity while demanding commitment in the pursuit of excellence. Staff are highly committed to ensuring that the school remains inclusive for pupils with a range of needs. When pupils start at the school they all have a personal meeting with a member of staff who will act as their mentor during their time at school. This quickly establishes a sense of belonging for all pupils

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<sup>13</sup> [www.philosophy4children.co.uk](http://www.philosophy4children.co.uk).



and provides a clear message that every individual is valued and belongs to the school community. Many pupils are involved in performing arts projects prior to starting at the school. These are very popular and make a very positive contribution to helping to establish an inclusive school culture.

*The performing arts and other specific projects*

72. The strong emphasis on drama and music makes a significant contribution to creating a culture of tolerance and understanding. Opportunities for ethical and moral debate have been established in many areas of the curriculum, and drama provides a good framework for tackling a range of issues including discrimination and prejudice.
73. The school runs many projects that involve pupils working across year and ability groups. These opportunities ensure that older and younger pupils work together as well as involving pupils with a wide range of talents and aptitudes. Many of the projects are based within the performing arts and the school also enters the annual Kielder Challenge, an outdoor pursuits competition for inclusive teams of disabled and non-disabled young people.<sup>14</sup> Pupils learn from each other during these projects and this helps to reaffirm the culture of the school.

*A campus-wide approach*

74. The school works closely with the primary and special schools on the same site. A Campus Council has been established to ensure that collective views inform the development of the wider campus community. Pupils from each of the schools are also involved in a range of projects together, including performances in each other's schools. This provides opportunities to establish a greater understanding and appreciation of different people.
75. All the above combined with the way in which staff treat pupils helps them to become strong advocates for themselves and others. An openness to challenge and opportunities to voice their opinions help pupils feel treated as 'growing adults of equal worth'. It means that if occasional bullying or derogatory comments occur between pupils these are quickly dealt with – frequently by other pupils.

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<sup>14</sup> See: [www.fieldfarekielderchallenge.org.uk](http://www.fieldfarekielderchallenge.org.uk).