

Dealing with Homophobic and Transphobic bullying

'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 this is the case.'¹

Incidents of homophobic name calling/bullying are taken seriously and responded to in a similar way to other incidents. We recognise both indirect homophobic abuse e.g. "your bag's gay" and direct homophobic abuse e.g. a boy is called a "poof".

Principles

The Law

- It is illegal to discriminate against those who are lesbian, homosexual, or bisexual (2007 Equality Act)
- 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, self discipline among pupils and to prevent all forms of bullying. This includes the prevention of homophobic bullying and Transphobic bullying.
- Staff are protected under the Employment Equality (Sexual orientation) Regulations 2003.

What is it?

Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying can be defined as behaviour or language which makes a person feel unwelcome or marginalised because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, whether actual or perceived, or because of their association with people who are, or perceived to be, gay, bisexual or transgender (e.g. children of same-sex couples).¹

What does it look like?

- Homophobic/transphobic bullying/name calling occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbians, gay or bisexual or transgender people.
- It can include 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 "That's gay."
- Even when pupils may not know what the words mean, but use homophobic language against others, it is still a form of bullying/name calling.
- We do not view homophobic name calling as "harmless banter". We recognise that if it is not challenged at primary school it is harder to address at secondary school
- If a pupil is not explicitly told that homophobic bullying is wrong, they may think it is OK to do this

¹ Tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying among school-age children and young people. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homophobic-biphobic-and-transphobic-bullying-analytical-report>

² Safe To Learn, Embedding Anti- Bullying work in Schools – Homophobic Bullying DCSF 2007

Responding to an Incident

If we hear a child using homophobic language we will address it, using the agreed guidance below and guided by our knowledge of the individual pupil's maturity and personal circumstances.

1. Establish why homophobic language was used. What was the motivation?
2. Speak with the children which right such behaviour doesn't respect (the right to be/feel safe) How did it make X feel?
3. Ask if they know what the word means. e.g. (for homophobic language): After pupil answers
 - Clarify "It's when two men or two women love each other".
 - State "Calling someone gay/something gay is not acceptable when the word is used to tease or upset someone." Help child to understand how their behaviour affects others and how they have not respected the rights of another child.
 - If possible, establish where they have heard the word being used and who uses it.
4. Resolve conflict (write letter, verbal apologies, shake hands etc.)
5. If name calling continues sanction child in line with Behaviour Policy.
6. Class Teacher/Inclusion Manager/Head Teacher to speak with the parents to inform them of the incident.

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Person responsible: R. K. Mahil-Pooni