

# My attitudes towards sexual orientation

## - Teachers' notes

| Statement  | Teachers' notes  |
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| 1. I can tell straight away whether someone is lesbian, gay or bisexual.   | There are many stereotypes about lesbian, gay and bisexual people but it is impossible to know who is lesbian, gay or bisexual, based on their behaviour, what they like, how they dress or who their friends are. In FIT, Tega experiences homophobic bullying and many, including Jordan think he might be gay, when he isn't.   |
| 2. Girls should behave and look like girls.  | What do 'girls' look like? Does every girl look like that? Do these expectations about what 'girls' look like and behave like limit us in what we do? i.e. If a boy really likes dance but is afraid that he will be called 'gay' – he might choose not to do it. In FIT, Lee and Tega do not conform to traditional notions of what it means to be a girl or a boy and people therefore assume that they are gay or lesbian. Why do you think that is? What about the other characters in FIT who are lesbian, gay or bisexual – do they adhere to gender stereotypes? There is a diversity of gender expression among all women and men no matter what their sexual orientation. What is regarded as 'stereotypically masculine' or 'stereotypically feminine' depends very much on the culture and the time period. |
| 3. Boys should behave and look like boys.  | See 2. If students have different answers for 2. and 3. discuss why this is.   |
| 4. Display of affection between people of the same sex is always wrong.  | It may be valuable to explore this in more detail, e.g. girls holding hands with their best female friend, behaviour of rugby teams, etc. Which types of intimacy, if any, are acceptable? Shaking hands? Hugging? Kissing? OK if heterosexual but not if gay or lesbian? Cultural differences (e.g. 'men can kiss men in France but not in England')? Differences between generations? What was students reaction to Karmel and Kim kissing?  |
| 5. People choose to be gay or lesbian.   | Do lesbian, gay or bisexual people choose their sexuality any more than heterosexual people? In FIT, how does Ryan feel about being gay? Would he say that he chose to be gay? (see also <a href="http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/sexual_orientation_faqs/2701.asp">http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/sexual_orientation_faqs/2701.asp</a> .)  |
| 6. If my best friend came out to me as gay or lesbian, I would have to end our friendship.   | Why is that? Who has changed in the relationship – the person who is came out or their friends? Isaac initially rejects his long friendship with Ryan (they've known each other since they were nine years old) when he becomes aware that Ryan is gay? Would you do the same? Watch Isaac's diary 5.  |
| 7. If a family member or a close friend that I had known for a long time told me they were lesbian or gay, I would feel sad that they hadn't told me sooner. | The coming out process is different for everyone and everyone has the right to come out in their own time and in their own way. Why would students feel sad/not sad if a family member or close friend told them they were gay? How do the characters in FIT come out? What is different for each character, what is similar? (see also <a href="http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/coming_out/default.asp">http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/coming_out/default.asp</a> )  |
| 8. Gay men fancy all other men.  | Who believes this in FIT? Why do they think this? This statement is no truer than the suggestion that heterosexual people are indiscriminately attracted to all members of the opposite sex.   |
| 9. Bisexual people fancy everyone.   | See 8.   |
| 10. Lesbians fancy all   | See 8.   |

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| other women.   |  |
| 11. If I had friends who were lesbian, gay or bisexual, I would be afraid that people might think that I was lesbian, gay or bisexual too. | Is this a reason not to be friends with someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual? Why do people think that way? Which stereotypes is this based on? Do gay people fancy all men and lesbians all women? (See 17.)   |
| 12. It should be illegal to talk about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in school.   | Section 28 was a piece of local government legislation which didn't apply to schools but was interpreted by many to mean that schools couldn't talk about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues or homophobic bullying. It was repealed in 2003 and schools are free to discuss all these issues. (see also <a href="http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/about_us/2762.asp">http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/about_us/2762.asp</a> and <a href="http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/history_of_lesbian_gay_and_bisexual_equality/default.asp">http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/history_of_lesbian_gay_and_bisexual_equality/default.asp</a> ) |
| 13. I don't have any friends or family members who are lesbian, gay or bisexual.   | Government estimates that six per cent of the general population are lesbian, gay or bisexual. This makes it very likely that everyone will know someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual – it is just a question of whether they feel comfortable being out and sharing that information.  |
| 14. There is nothing wrong with gay or lesbian couples holding hands in public.  | If there is a spread of responses here, it would be interesting to know why some students feel that gay and lesbian people should not be visible. Is it ok for straight couple to display affection in that way?   |
| 15. There is nothing wrong with gay or lesbian couples kissing in public.  | See 15.  |
| 16. Teachers should not be allowed to be openly lesbian, gay or bisexual.  | The same rules should apply to all teachers, regardless of sexual orientation. So if straight teachers are allowed to talk about their spouse, they should also be allowed to talk about their civil partner. See 12.  |
| 17. It is OK for someone to be lesbian, gay or bisexual so long as they keep it to themselves.   | Should lesbian, gay and bisexual people have to live their lives hiding their relationships? What effects is that secrecy likely to have on relationships? Can you think of strong feelings you had to hide?   |
| 18. Civil partnerships for lesbian, gay and bisexual people are a good thing.  | Talk about different concepts of marriage in different cultures and eras. You could also discuss what makes a family. This may also raise issues of whether civil partnerships are equivalent to marriage. (see <a href="http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/civil_partnership/default.asp">http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/civil_partnership/default.asp</a> .)   |
| 19. There should be equality for all people regardless of their sexual orientation.  | What arguments can students make against equality? What does equality mean? Can students think of groups other than lesbian, gay and bisexual people who are or have been treated unequally in Britain or in other countries? What can we do about that?   |