



Tackling homophobic language

Stonewall

education@stonewall.org.uk

www.stonewall.org.uk/atschool

Charity No 1101255

By Hannah Kibirige and Luke Tryl

Designed by Lucy Ward

Tackling homophobic language

Foreword

Sadly, even in the second decade of the twenty-first century homophobic language remains as prevalent as ever. Ninety nine per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people report hearing the derogatory use of phrases such as ‘that’s so gay’ or ‘you’re so gay’ in school. Unfortunately many of those schools still continue to cling to the old adage: ‘Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me’. The truth however, as good educators know, is that unchallenged use of ‘gay’ to mean bad or rubbish has a profoundly negative effect on gay young people’s self-esteem.

That’s why Stonewall has launched a ground-breaking new campaign to make plain the importance of tackling homophobic language. We’ve produced a series of posters challenging the use of the word gay, alongside this guide for teachers and a partner guide for young people on how they too can challenge homophobic language among their peers.

To meet the evident demand for teacher training on this issue, Stonewall will also be holding Train the Trainer seminars across Britain, as part of our School Champions programme. These one day seminars give teachers all the tools that they need to train the rest of the staff in their school to tackle homophobic bullying and language.

This guide showcases the ways in which some outstanding schools, local authorities and academy groups are already tackling homophobic language with young people. Their experiences show that this work needn’t be difficult and has benefits which go across the school community. We very much hope that you’ll join them in this vital work and, most important, that you’ll let us know what more we can do to help along the way.

Ben Summerskill

Chief Executive, Stonewall

Contents

Background	2
What is homophobic language?	4
What's the impact?	7
Barriers to tackling homophobic language	11
What schools can do – the basics	14
What schools can do – engaging young people	22
What the law says	31
Lesson ideas	36
Problem solving	38
Top ten recommendations	44
Resources	46
The case studies	48

1

Background

The past five years have seen significant progress in tackling homophobic bullying in Britain's schools. Research by the University of Cambridge for Stonewall in *The School Report 2012*, a survey of 1,600 lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, found that while levels of homophobic bullying remain high they have fallen by 15 per cent over the past five years. The number of schools explicitly saying that homophobic bullying is wrong has more than doubled and gay young people are now almost twice as likely to feel able to speak out about homophobic bullying.

However, *The School Report* also revealed that little progress has been made in tackling the use of homophobic language across Britain's schools, which remains endemic. 99 per cent of gay young people say that they hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' and 'you're so gay' in school and 96 per cent hear homophobic remarks such as 'poof' and 'lezza'. The use of homophobic language often goes unchallenged by teachers and other school staff and at the same time is fuelled by celebrities using homophobic language in the public eye.

These pupil experiences are mirrored in *The Teachers' Report 2009*, YouGov polling of 2,000 primary and secondary school teachers. 95 per cent of secondary school teachers and 75 per cent of primary school teachers hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' and 'you're so gay'. Yet two thirds of secondary school staff and two in five primary school staff admit that they do not always intervene when they hear this language being used. Teachers tell us there are a number of reasons they don't always respond to homophobic language but most often it is because they lack the support and confidence to do so.

The use of homophobic language has a negative impact on gay young people, making them feel less happy at school and less likely to reach their full potential. In the worst cases, homophobic language impacts on young people's mental health and wellbeing.

This guide provides teachers and school leaders with straightforward practical ways to prevent and tackle homophobic language. Drawing on the experiences of those schools, local authorities and academy trusts who are leading the way on this work across the country, this guide shares tried and tested examples of policies, strategies and lesson plans to help schools start this important work. To accompany this guide we've also created a series of new posters designed to challenge young people's use of the word 'gay' and written a guide for young people on how they can tackle homophobic language amongst their peers.



2

What is homophobic language?

Homophobic language comes in many different forms. Most of the time it is used unconsciously and without hurtful intent. While some language is clearly homophobic, in other cases it can be difficult for teachers to know what counts as homophobic language. Before starting to tackle the problem it's important that all school staff know exactly what homophobic language sounds like. Being clear about this will help make sure that every instance is challenged consistently.

'That's so gay' or 'you're so gay'

The most common form of homophobic language is 'that's so gay' and 'you're so gay'. 99 per cent of gay young people report hearing the casual use of these phrases in school. These comments are sometimes directed towards people who are actually, or perceived to be, gay. However, they are most often used to mean that something is bad or rubbish, with no conscious link to sexual orientation at all. A pupil might say 'those trainers are so gay' (to mean rubbish or uncool) or 'stop being so gay' (to mean stop being so annoying). Teachers sometimes don't feel they have to challenge this secondary use of 'gay'.

“Usually anti-gay words and remarks happen every single lesson and 99.9 per cent of the time nothing at all gets done about it. Leo, 16 (South East)

“Even at primary level to call another child gay is currently a term of abuse.

Jill, teacher, primary school (Yorkshire & the Humber)

Homophobic language is also commonly heard outside the classroom environment in the home and in particular from celebrities and in the media. This can make young people think that it is acceptable or even cool to use homophobic language.

“ I don't want that one, it's gay. Radio 1 DJ, Chris Moyles referring to a ring tone

“ Little gay-looking boy / So gay I can barely say it with a straight face-looking boy... lyrics to a 2013 song by rapper Eminem.

“ Children have misconceptions of meanings and usage...what is viewed in the media appears to be the main cause of this. Tom, teacher, independent faith school (South East)

'No homo'

Young people are increasingly using the expression 'no homo', usually after they've said something they worry might be perceived as being gay, to make it clear that they are not gay. For example, 'I love Wayne Rooney. No homo.' or 'my bros rock my world. No homo'.

Homophobic insults

Homophobic language also refers to terms of abuse specifically directed at gay people. This includes words such as 'queer', 'poof', 'fag', 'faggot', 'dyke' and 'lezza'. 96 per cent of pupils say that they hear these kinds of words used in school. These abusive terms aren't only used towards gay pupils, but are often directed at pupils who are thought to be gay or in some way different, for instance sporty girls and academic boys.

“ Some terms like 'poof' and 'faggot' are standard insults usually between older boys. Molly, midday assistant, primary school (Scotland)

“ I hear 'dyke' and 'homo' almost every single lesson.

Em, 16, secondary school (Greater London)

Homophobic language doesn't just take place face-to-face; it is also prevalent online. The website **NoHomophobes.com** looks at the use of homophobic language on Twitter and has found that:

So gay: used on average over 10,000 times daily
No homo: used on average over 10,000 times daily
Faggot: used on average over 45,000 times daily
Dyke: used on average over 4,000 times daily

Young people tell Stonewall that homophobic language is endemic across social networking sites, such as Facebook. This means that young people are inundated with homophobic language across all aspects of their life.



Last summer I was attacked on Facebook through a series of comments and wall posts calling me a 'fag'. Harry, 16, single sex private school (North West)

3

What's the impact?

Homophobic language is often dismissed as 'harmless banter' that isn't intentionally hurtful. However when homophobic language goes unchallenged, this has a clear negative impact on young people's sense of belonging, self-esteem and attainment at school.

Self-esteem

84 per cent of gay young people say they are distressed when they hear the word 'gay' used as an insult, with almost half (45 per cent) saying that it distresses them a lot. When gay young people, many of whom are just coming to terms with their sexuality, hear the word gay constantly equated with something negative they start to feel that there is something wrong with them. This leads to gay young people feeling isolated in the school community. More than half of gay young people feel that they 'don't belong' at school. In some cases, this has a serious impact on mental health. Nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of gay and bisexual young people have tried to take their own life at some point and more than half (56 per cent) have self-harmed. In many cases, this is related to the fact that they feel isolated by a school culture which excuses the use of homophobic language.

“... it's the constant stream of anti-gay remarks that people don't even know they make. I feel awful all the time. Sophie, 15, private secondary school (South East)

“I once carved the words 'dirty lesbian' into my thigh because people kept calling me that. I hated myself. Claudia, 17, single-sex secondary academy (South East)

“It makes me not want to be in my lessons. Cat, 14, faith secondary school (West Midlands)

Tackling homophobic language isn't only an end in itself; it has a clear link to school improvement. In schools where gay young people don't hear the use of homophobic language they not only feel happier but perform better too.

Different families

Homophobic language doesn't just affect gay young people. It affects pupils who have gay friends and family as well, by suggesting that there's something inferior or wrong with their friends and family members. There are now around 20,000 young people growing up with same-sex parents. Research by the University of Cambridge in *Different Families* 2010 found that the children of these parents find the use of the word gay as an insult upsetting and makes them think there is something wrong with their parents.



When people say 'gay' ... I feel worse than other people. Mark, eight



I wish they didn't be rude about gay people. Sian, nine

Bullying

The constant use of homophobic language can lead young people to think being gay is bad and that it's acceptable to treat gay people less favourably. The use of homophobic language can quickly escalate into more serious homophobic bullying. Currently more than half (55 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people at secondary school say that they experience bullying. The majority (53 per cent) say that they experience verbal abuse, while 16 per cent have experienced physical abuse and six per cent have had death threats.

There is a strong link between failure to tackle homophobic language and high levels of homophobic bullying. In schools where teachers never challenge homophobic remarks the rate of homophobic bullying is far higher than in schools where teachers always challenge homophobic remarks when they hear them (71 per cent compared to 43 per cent).

“I tried coming out as bisexual at 16 to everyone but all throughout class I got chants of ‘bi-bi’ being thrown at me, thinking they were funny. The teacher was right there and never said a word. Olivia, 18, secondary academy (North West)

“My locker was broken into and my property vandalised with anti-gay words. Thomas, now 19, single-sex faith academy (North West)

Homophobic language doesn't just reinforce negative perceptions of gay people but also leads to a general intolerance of being different. Where homophobic language is widespread young people, gay or straight, feel less able to be themselves or take part in the activities they enjoy because they are worried about being labelled gay.

“If people are brought up in an environment where everyone says ‘ah, that's so gay’, they are in an environment where gay is seen as bad, or negative, or a joke. ZeeTee Campaign Volunteer (Wiltshire)

“I talked to the kids when they called one of the boys gay because he was a dancer. They realised how talented he was and began to look up to him. Alison, teacher, secondary school (West Midlands)

Hate crime

Occasionally, the prejudicial attitudes that young people develop because of homophobic language will go beyond bullying. YouGov polling for Stonewall in *Homophobic Hate Crime: The Gay British Crime Survey 2013* found that one in six gay people had been victims of hate crimes and hate incidents, rising to one in five amongst 18-24 year olds. Half of these victims reported that the perpetrators were aged under 25, highlighting the dangerous progression from homophobic language and bullying in school to homophobic hate crime.

“Police spoke to the parents of young people aged 12 or so who had been homophobic, abusing me and my partner and vandalising our allotment. This seemed to deal with the problem. But I never felt quite at ease in the area thereafter. Maureen, 53 (Scotland)

“There needs to be more education in schools as it's teenagers carrying out the attacks, both boys and girls! Morgan, 35 (London)



Barriers to tackling homophobic language

Despite the negative impact of homophobic language, only 10 per cent of teachers challenge it every time it occurs. Young people tell us that it is rarely treated in the same way as racist or sexist language.



If someone makes a racist or sexist remark then staff and some students are quick to punish the student who made the remark. But if someone makes a homophobic remark then no one says anything and people just brush it off as if it's alright to say these things. Liam, 16, Pupil Referral Unit (London)



I went to see the teachers and they said, just ignore them. Sacha, 19

Teachers say that there are a number of reasons why they don't always intervene to tackle homophobic bullying:

'It's not homophobic'

Half of secondary school teachers and over a third of primary school teachers who do not always intervene in cases of homophobic language say this is 'because they did not believe the pupils were being homophobic'. Almost half of secondary school teachers and a quarter of primary school teachers think that the homophobic language they hear is 'just harmless banter'.



The expression 'gay' in this context has little or nothing to do with sexuality. It is interchangeable with 'crap' or 'stupid'. John, teacher, secondary school (West Midlands)



Most young children experiment with language and use it for effect or as an exploration of what may or may not be permitted. We come down on malicious behaviour, but let good natured banter pass, so long as the recipient is not unhappy about it. Stephen, primary school (West Midlands)

Often teachers respond in this way because they think there is no harm in young people using gay to mean bad or rubbish if there isn't any link to sexual orientation. However, the use of homophobic language, regardless of intent, leaves gay young people feeling isolated and upset, impacts on their school work and in the worst cases can lead to mental health issues.

'It's too common'

Some teachers worry that the use of homophobic language is so prevalent in school that tackling every instance would take too much time and effort. This can make it difficult to get all staff members on board with tackling homophobic language. One in six secondary school teachers say homophobic language is 'too common to intervene in every instance'.

“The homophobic expression 'that's so gay' and others of that type are so commonplace that there is not enough time to challenge every utterance of it. Hope, teacher, secondary school (South West)

“If I dealt with all misbehaviour I would never get my job done – tactical ignoring and moving a situation on by distraction often neutralises it.

Sian, teacher, primary school (Wales)

Schools that have successfully tackled homophobic language say that challenging it consistently is the best way to help young people understand it won't be tolerated.

“It was in response to a child calling another boy 'gay'. This happens on a nearly daily basis, usually when they think I cannot hear. We have discussed it before as a class. On this occasion, the remark was made in a light-hearted way and so I felt it was important to address why the comment was inappropriate. We discussed why it was wrong to use the word 'gay' even as a jokey insult and one pupil compared it to racism. We then thought of alternative adjectives. Cerys, teacher, primary school (Wales)

Homophobic comments from teachers

Nearly one in five gay young people (17 per cent) say that teachers within a school make homophobic comments. When teachers use homophobic language, they role model this behaviour to young people making them think that it is also acceptable for them to use phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay'.

I hear teachers using the word 'gay' in a negative way just as much as I hear the word being used by students. Zoe, 14, boarding school (North East)

Teachers don't do anything about it; even teachers have said things are 'gay'.

Summer, 13, private secondary school (East Midlands)

'We've never been trained'

The biggest barrier to tackling homophobic language is a lack of training and support. Most teachers want to challenge homophobic language but lack the confidence to do so. More than nine in ten (94 per cent) primary and secondary school teachers have not received any specific training in how to tackle homophobic bullying and language. Some teachers also tell us that they don't have the support of their school leaders in tackling homophobic language. Only two in five secondary school teachers and less than half of primary school teachers (46 per cent) say their headteacher demonstrates a clear leadership role when it comes to tackling homophobia. Only a quarter say the same when it comes to their school governors.

Phrases such as 'you're gay' and 'that's gay' are now in common use among secondary school aged pupils as a way of showing displeasure at something. It is often not tackled by many teachers as no training is offered on how to tackle it. Leah, teacher, secondary school (Yorkshire and the Humber)

There needs to be much more work done before homophobia is treated the same way as racism in schools and in the wider community.

Siobhan, teacher, secondary school (Yorkshire and the Humber)

5

What schools can do – the basics

The good news is that tackling homophobic language doesn't need to be difficult. Schools across Britain are already doing it and having great results. There are many different ways to go about tackling homophobic language, but the most important thing is to get the policies and processes in place to underpin your work. The more exciting work comes next.

Getting the basics right reduces the chances of problems arising and will make teachers and parents feel much more confident about what the school is doing.

School policy

Creating a school policy that clearly states homophobic language is wrong and will not be tolerated from any member of the school community – students, staff or parents and carers – is the best way to start tackling the problem. This sets out a clear expectation on the part of your school that homophobic language will not be used and isn't acceptable. It also means that staff will feel confident about the school's position and what actions they can and should take when they hear homophobic language as well as when dealing with parents or others who raise concerns.

There is little value in a school policy that nobody knows about. Ensure that the policy is promoted across the whole school community, for example in home school agreements, assemblies, school websites, in classrooms and corridors and at parents' evenings. That way there's no excuse for pupils to use homophobic language and parents are much more likely to engage with and support the policy as well. We know that very often pupils pick up

homophobic language from beyond the school gate. If you can enlist parents to help you challenge homophobic language you're much more likely to be successful getting rid of it altogether.

The best policies are those designed by the whole school community. Involve pupils and parents in deciding the wording of your policy and get governors on board too. Above all, be clear that this is something that the whole school takes seriously and in particular the school leadership.

In practice

In **Bath and North East Somerset Council** school policy forms the bedrock in tackling homophobic language. There is an active Challenging Homophobia Steering Group, which includes young people. Here different policies can be discussed and promoted in partnership with the Anti-Bullying Strategy Group. This means that work in exploring and challenging homophobic language is shared and promoted throughout Children's Services.

There are two simple rules that schools often use to tackle homophobic language and other prejudiced-based language:

- 1 Words that individuals use or would use to describe themselves (e.g. *gay, lesbian, bisexual, girl, black*) are acceptable.**
- 2 Words or phrases that wrongly imply an individual's membership of a group and/or refer to that particular group in a derogatory way are wrong (e.g. *faggot, that's so gay, you're so gay*).**

Schools sometimes worry that parents will complain about work to tackle homophobic language. The reality however is that the vast majority of parents want their children to learn in an environment where they can reach their full potential. YouGov polling for Stonewall found that 93 per cent of parents and 92 per cent of people of faith believe that homophobic bullying should be tackled in school.

Staff training

Challenging homophobic language can seem a daunting prospect, particularly for staff who have had no training in how to go about it. Training will not only make staff feel more confident to tackle homophobic language but will also help them to do this work more effectively.

Before training

Training is most effective when it targets the specific issues in the school. The best way to make sure this happens is for schools to try to answer the following questions before doing a training session:

Tip: A short anonymous staff (and/or pupil) survey is a quick and effective way to find out this information

- 1 What kind of homophobic language is being used, how often and by whom?**
- 2 How often do teachers and other school staff intervene? What actions do they take?**
- 3 How confident are teachers and other staff to intervene?**
- 4 Why don't staff always intervene?**

Once it is clear what the main issues in the school are, you can use this to plan a session.

In practice

Data has played an important part in anti-homophobia work in Hertfordshire. **Herts for Learning Ltd**, which provides teaching, learning, leadership and business support to schools and education settings, carried out a survey with 18 volunteer schools, finding that 40 per cent of primary school pupils and 85 per cent of secondary school pupils had used gay either to be hurtful or to mean bad. The results led Herts for Learning to train staff, ensuring consistency in response to homophobic language. All staff, including support staff, were given the same extensive training.

Delivering training

Training doesn't need to be a time-consuming process. It's entirely possible to plan sessions as short as 30 minutes and there are already

lots of existing resources to help. Stonewall has developed teacher training DVDs for primary and secondary schools as well as case studies and role plays. Local schools or academy chains can also work together to deliver training. Involving school leaders in training, at least for part of the session, communicates the message that tackling homophobic language is something that senior management regard as a priority.

In practice

All staff at **Perry Beeches Academy Trust** in Birmingham have been trained to recognise and challenge homophobic language. The Executive Head teacher has been involved in the delivery of this training in order to make plain that tackling homophobic language is a key priority for all of the Perry Beeches schools.

Schools which have delivered training tell Stonewall that this has a direct positive impact on the use of homophobic language in school.

In practice

Dalmain Primary School, Lewisham, delivered whole-staff training at the start of the school year. Staff quickly took on board the importance of tackling homophobic language. Since staff have put the training into practice, the number of incidents of homophobic language has fallen dramatically. For Dalmain, just bringing this issue to the forefront of the minds of staff and pupils was key in tackling homophobic language.



Celebrating difference: Challenging homophobia in primary schools – Stonewall's primary school staff training DVD



Spell It Out – Stonewall's secondary school staff training DVD

Evaluation and follow up

Evaluate whether staff feel more confident to tackle homophobic language following training. The easiest way to do this is through a follow-up questionnaire. It's unlikely that staff will feel completely confident after one training session. Evaluation will also help the school decide on what follow up training might be needed.

In practice

Before undergoing training, pupils and staff at **Alfred Salter Primary School**, Southwark completed an equalities questionnaire. This found that:

- 75 per cent of pupils were hearing homophobic bullying/language on a daily basis
- 65 per cent of staff thought using gay to mean bad was not homophobic
- No staff had received training to enable them to support LGB & T pupils or tackle homophobia

These statistics quickly changed following whole-staff training and the school is now a Stonewall Primary School Champion, offering training on a termly basis.

Stonewall's **Train the Trainer** seminars give school staff the tools and skills they need to train the rest of their staff to tackle homophobic bullying and language. It's also a great opportunity to share best practice and learn how other schools are tackling homophobic language in their classrooms. 100 per cent of training participants say that they felt 'more confident to tackle homophobia in their school' as a result of attending the course. The seminars also give participants the opportunity to develop an individual action plan for their school and give their school membership of the School Champions programme. To find out more visit www.stonewall.org.uk/teachertraining

Deal with language every time it occurs

When dealing with homophobic language consistency is key. The schools that have most effectively challenged homophobic language are those that take a zero-tolerance approach. This means that all members of staff, including non-teaching staff, challenge homophobic language whenever it is used. Staff should refer back to the school's anti-bullying policy, explain why the language is homophobic, the effect it has on gay young people and what the consequences will be for repeat offences. This should mirror the school's procedures for dealing with racist or sexist comments.



One boy referred to another boy as 'gay' and he was challenged immediately in front of the whole class. His response was to say it meant he was happy but when the incident was repeated he was challenged again, made to write a letter of apology and made aware that his behaviour was unacceptable to the whole class. Tracey, teacher, primary school (North West)

In practice

At **Cannock Chase High School**, Staffordshire homophobic language is always challenged, quietly and sensitively in the first instance, but it can be dealt with more severely if necessary. This is the same as all other forms of prejudicial language, to which the school has a zero-tolerance approach.

Only when homophobic language is challenged consistently and pupils recognise that there are real consequences will they stop using it. Some teachers tell Stonewall that tackling homophobic language is always left to them or seen as their responsibility; this shouldn't be the case and creates a real risk that pupils will avoid using it in front of that particular teacher but not more widely.



I heard one pupil say to his friend, 'don't say that's so gay in front of Mrs Brown, she'll get really angry'. The problem is that they wouldn't say that about every teacher. Sandra, 17, secondary academy (West Midlands)

If staff are reluctant to challenge homophobic language consistently, remind them that this isn't a tick-box exercise. Homophobic language has a real impact on the wellbeing of gay young people and others in the school.

Reporting and recording



When teachers hear anti-gay remarks being made they are challenged immediately and then logged and dealt with. Also a detention is given.

Juliet, 13, private secondary school (South East)

Recording how, when and where each instance of homophobic language happened and what actions were taken as a result allows schools to identify trends and hotspots in the use of homophobic language. It also helps to ensure that every incident is dealt with in the same way. If, for example, one particular friendship group keeps using homophobic language then a meeting with parents might be needed. If incidents are taking place across a particular year group then a specific assembly should deal with it. Alternatively if homophobic language is occurring across the whole school, it may be time to review the school policy or check whether staff are feeling confident enough to tackle it.

In practice

The Best Start Primary Federation, Hackney has an online database which captures and records all homophobic incidents. By logging a detailed description of each incident, they can look at incidents on a case-by-case basis, or judge the nature of homophobia as a whole at their primary schools.

In practice

Dalmain Primary School has implemented an Equality Book where prejudice related bullying is recorded. The nature of the bullying is recorded and the learning mentor follows up all incidents.

Some staff worry about challenging homophobic language because it will then go on a pupil's school record. However recording and reporting can be done anonymously. Only repeat incidents need go on a pupil's record.

Explaining language

Banning the use of certain words or phrases may seem like the easiest way to tackle homophobic language. Often, however, this isn't the best approach – we all know that the moment you tell a young person not to say something they will want to say it more! Many pupils who use homophobic language don't realise that they're being homophobic and hurtful to gay people and will stop

once they do. Explain to pupils that when they use the word 'gay' in a negative way to mean rubbish or bad, they make gay people and people with gay family or friends feel bad about themselves. Talking about equivalent racist or sexist remarks often helps young people to understand why homophobic language is wrong.

“ I talked openly and honestly with the children about what 'being gay' actually meant and discussed why it was not very nice or relevant to use the word gay as an insult. Nikky, primary school (North West)

In practice

Wiltshire Council's ZeeTee (zero-tolerance to homophobic language) campaign is designed to tackle homophobic language. The campaign has created a short video of young people explaining why gay shouldn't be used to mean bad. The video uses examples such as 'gay trousers' (i.e. gay people don't look good) and a 'gay bottom maths set' (i.e. gay people are stupid) to show why the negative use of the word is wrong.

Banning homophobic language without explaining why can also have unintended consequences. Pupils start to think that the word is taboo and that 'gay' does mean something bad or that they can't discuss anything to do with gay people, potentially encouraging homophobic attitudes. Explaining the proper meaning of the word 'gay' helps to make sure that this doesn't happen.

In practice

Holbrook Primary School in Wiltshire introduced a zero-tolerance approach to homophobic language. Whilst the use of such language decreased, the word 'gay' remained loaded. This became clear when a year six boy was talking about his uncle and mentioned that he was gay. 'You can't say that!' was the immediate response of several of his peers. It became apparent that an unintended consequence of the work was to suggest the word gay should never be used. The school realised that wider work to explain what gay means in its correct context was needed.

6

What schools can do – engaging young people

The schools that challenge homophobic bullying most successfully are those that actively engage young people in their work. If young people become self-policing in their use of homophobic language it means that instances are more likely to be challenged both in and outside the school gates.

‘Gay. Let’s get over it’ posters

One of the best ways to tackle homophobic language is to make young people reflect on their use of the word. Stonewall’s ‘Gay. *Let’s get over it*’ posters are designed to do just that. The posters deliberately challenge pupils’ assumptions that it’s okay or cool to use homophobic language and encourage young people to think about why they use the word gay in the way that they do.

Schools can use the posters in a variety of ways. One of the easiest is simply to put the posters up around school, in corridors and





classrooms and let young people have their own discussions about them. Assemblies or lessons to find out what young people think about the posters can follow this initial display, creating the space for a wider discussion about the use of homophobic language. Another follow up activity is to encourage young people to think of their own slogans. These slogans can be displayed alongside the Stonewall posters; pupils are more likely to engage with materials written by their peers and in their own voice.

“Just this year a new English teacher joined who is gay, I think, and he has one of the Stonewall *Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!* posters in his classroom. I don't do English but I know because I go to debating and he runs that. Just seeing the poster in his room is really cool, especially at a school where it's never mentioned, none of it is ever mentioned. So just to see that in his room is really cool – rare, but nice to see. Mike, 17

If the posters are graffitied they should be taken down and replaced, but graffitied posters are also an ideal starting point for any discussion about homophobic language as well as an opportunity to remind pupils about the ground rules.

Events, assemblies and lessons

Making homophobic language the focus of whole-school or year-group events such as assemblies ensures that all pupils are aware of the school's policy. Assemblies can also be used to address a particular issue that has arisen in school or to link tackling homophobic language with the school's wider inclusion work.

Homophobic language could be included, for example, in an assembly about behaviours that are unacceptable in school.

In practice

Madeley High School, Crewe, used an assembly to combat homophobic language. They made sure they were dealing with the issue positively, playing Tom Robinson's 'Glad to be Gay' at the beginning of the assembly. This, accompanied by statistics, a short video, images and examples of the types of language which aren't accepted in the school, delivered a strong message.

Specific dates such as LGBT History Month, anti-bullying week, International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) or whole-school diversity days provide opportunities to focus on homophobic language. Some of the best schools have, for instance, asked pupils to create presentations, role-plays, posters or films on why homophobic language is wrong.



In practice

Rokeby School, Newham, adapted Stonewall's 'Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!' T-shirts for LGBT History Month to a variety of characteristics including 'Some People Are Black', 'Some People Are Asian' and 'Some People Are Short' to show how discrimination can affect everyone and the importance of celebrating difference and not using prejudicial language.

Stonewall's feature film for secondary school students *FIT* has a specific chapter 'Karmel's story' which looks at the impact that homophobic language and in particular the use of 'that's so gay' has. This 15 minute chapter can be shown to young people and followed by a class discussion that encourages pupils to think about why Karmel gets so upset at hearing 'that's so gay'.



In practice

Southend High School for Girls, Essex, focused on homophobic bullying for anti-bullying week. They created a presentation specifically centred on language which addressed use of the terms 'queer', 'poof' and 'gay', as well as comparing the phrase 'you're so gay' to phrases such as 'you're so Christian/black/disabled'. This made pupils think about the language they use.

Engaging pupils shouldn't be restricted to certain days or lessons. Tackling homophobic language can be incorporated across the curriculum. In English lessons, you can discuss with pupils how homophobic language is used in the media. In History lessons, you can look at how the meaning of the word gay has changed over time. You can even use statistics on homophobic language in *The School Report* as part of a Maths lesson, or encourage pupils to monitor homophobic language for a statistics project.

In practice

All of the **Perry Beeches** schools recognise and celebrate all festivals with no exception for gay issues. Each November all students are engaged in displays, debates, lessons and assemblies around homophobic language and bullying. Positive images of gay people are shared around the school and positive gay role models are supported to be 'out' and share their experiences including students, staff and visitors to the school.

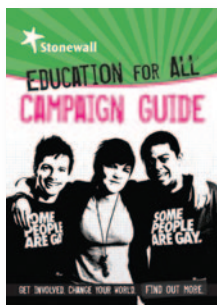
Campaigns



Schools often find that when they work to tackle homophobic language pupils, gay and straight, want to get involved in trying to help. Encouraging young people to run their own campaigns against homophobic language is a fun and effective way to engage pupils. Stonewall's pocket-sized *Gay. Get Over It!* guide shows young people the impact that homophobic language can have, equips them to challenge peers when they use 'gay' in a homophobic way and gives them some ideas for running their own campaigns in school.

“

It doesn't happen often, but I challenge it every time I hear the word gay being used in a negative sense. Teachers have always corrected students when they use them as well. I've never or rarely heard 'poof', 'queer' or 'faggot' being used. Mike, 17



Stonewall's *Education For All Campaign Guide* provides some other ways for pupils to start tackling homophobic language themselves, including creating films, poster campaigns, holding debates and delivering presentations, workshops or assemblies to peers. Pupil-led workshops give pupils, and particularly gay pupils or those with gay friends or family members, the opportunity to discuss how homophobic language affects them. In some of the best schools, pupils have delivered workshops or training to teachers on why and how they can tackle homophobic language.

Stonewall's Youth Volunteering programme is another way that pupils can learn how to run campaigns to tackle homophobic bullying. Pupils are trained over a residential weekend by Stonewall on how to deliver workshops and presentations in their schools and provided with support and advice throughout their campaign. To find out more about the programme visit www.youngstonewall.org.uk.

Schools have also found that involving local LGB & T youth groups is a great way of getting the message across to pupils, allowing them to hear from other young people outside of the school community who often feel more comfortable sharing their experiences.

Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!

In addition to our posters on homophobic language, schools can also display our 'Some People Are Gay. Get Over It' posters around school. These posters are available in English, Welsh and a range of modern foreign languages as well as Latin.



In practice

Wiltshire's ZeeTee campaign used a 'myth busters' film to explain why homophobic language is wrong. This was made by a youth group, featuring young people talking honestly about how homophobic language affected them.

Pledges

Of course, not every pupil will want to run a campaign. However, schools should find ways of engaging all pupils in the work, for instance creating a school language charter or a pledge that students are encouraged to sign up to. The pledge can be something as simple as 'I will not use homophobic language', or 'gay is a positive word, and I will use it positively!' Some schools have gone further and asked pupils to commit to challenging homophobic language used by peers on the internet.



Someone always says something. Most students are gay supporters, so if a teacher doesn't say something, a student will. I know I've told people off for it. Deb, 15, boarding school (Greater London)

There are lots of creative ways to bring a pledge to life, such as a wall where pupils sign with a message (either online or in the school) or receiving a badge or wristband in return for a signature. Another way is to use petitions where all pupils, for instance in the school council, try to sign up as many of their peers as possible. Asking pupils to sign up after an assembly or other event about homophobic language will encourage more young people to take part.



In practice

In **Wiltshire**, after watching a short video, pupils can support the ZeeTee (zero-tolerance to homophobic language) campaign by signing the ZeeTee Pledge. They then receive a 'Respecting Difference' wristband or badge in return.

Schools that have prefect and/or buddy systems find that one way to encourage pupil policing of homophobic language is to give these older students responsibility for tackling homophobic language amongst younger students in the school.

Equalities groups

Setting up an equalities group, gay-straight alliance or school council that includes pupils is a way to make sure that policies are 'pupil-friendly'. Young people know their peers best and working with them will help schools find out useful information such as specific words or issues that need to be tackled. Equalities groups can organise petitions, enforce policy by correcting peers when they hear inappropriate language and even organise events for anti-bullying week and LGBT History Month.

In practice

At **Derby Moor Community Sports College** anti-bullying student ambassadors created a guide for their teachers which encouraged them to challenge all forms of homophobic language, and provided a list of words and phrases such as 'you're so gay' and 'that's so gay' that they would like their teachers to tackle.



In practice

At **Chew Valley School**, Bristol, the Youth Involvement Group (YIG) coordinated the work to combat homophobic language. Pupils suggest their peers 'buy a dictionary' upon hearing inappropriate language, as part of a similar poster campaign in the school. They are now working on training for staff to tackle homophobic language and ensure a zero-tolerance approach.

Role models

Role models can have a hugely beneficial impact on young people, particularly in terms of challenging stereotypes, empowering pupils and driving home the message that homophobic language is wrong. Talking about lesbian, gay and bisexual role models in lessons or inviting a gay role model into school to speak about homophobic language in an assembly is an effective way to show pupils that using 'gay' negatively insults real people. Role models don't have to be famous; they could be a lesbian, gay or bisexual person who works for a local business or organisation, a celebrity or even a gay teacher in the school.

“

I was watching Gareth Thomas on Big Brother and admired his story.

Aaron, 15, secondary school (North West)

“

Jessie J is a huge inspiration to me. When people say stuff to me, I think of her and tell myself that she got through it, and so can I.

Laura, 15, faith secondary school (South East)

Pupils and teachers can also use role models to challenge homophobic language and the pejorative use of the word 'gay'. For instance, when someone uses:

***That's so gay –
to mean something
uncool***

We're inundated with cool gay people. You can use gay people including Jessie J, Lucy Spraggan, Derren Brown and Matthew Mitcham to show that gay is definitely not uncool.

***That's so gay –
to mean something
pointless***

Use examples such as Alan Turing, who cracked the enigma code in WW2 to hand the allies the advantage, or poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy, to show that gay and pointless definitely don't mean the same thing.

***That's so gay –
to mean something
feminine***

Examples such as former Welsh rugby captain and Stonewall 'hero of the year' Gareth Thomas, basketball player John Amaechi and boxer Orlando Cruz can show that gender stereotyping is wrong and, in this context, homophobic.

7

What the law says

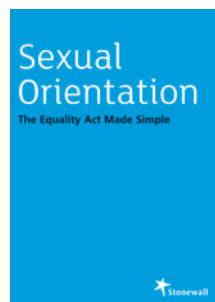
As this guide has highlighted there are many good reasons to tackle homophobic language. It creates an environment where pupils feel more able to be themselves and develop their talents, boosts young people's happiness and has a clear link to school improvement. In addition, the law also supports and places expectations on schools to tackle homophobic language.

Equality Act

The public sector Equality Duty requires that all schools in England, Scotland and Wales, including academies and free schools, eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Head teachers and governors are responsible for ensuring their school meets these statutory duties. Tackling homophobic language helps schools to meet this duty.

Schools are also expected to publish age appropriate equality objectives. Because homophobic language is a barrier to pupil achievement, many schools have chosen 'reducing incidents of homophobic language' as one of their equality objectives. Equality objectives should have tangible actions that allow schools to measure progress.

In addition there is specific legislation for teachers in England, Scotland and Wales.



For more information about the Equality Act 2010, see Stonewall's *Sexual Orientation The Equality Act Made Simple*

What the law says In England

Education and Inspections Act

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on school governing bodies in England and Wales to promote the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in their care. This includes lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. Homophobic language has a proven negative impact on the wellbeing of these young people and as such, schools have a responsibility to tackle it. The Act also gives head teachers the ability to respond to incidents that take place outside school hours, for example on public transport or use of homophobic language on the internet.

The UK Government has also made tackling homophobic bullying and language a key priority. Education Secretary Michael Gove described the use of homophobic language as 'outrageous and medieval'.

Ofsted

The Ofsted framework now explicitly directs inspectors to look at a school's efforts to tackle bullying and prejudicial language based on sexual orientation and how the school supports the needs of distinct groups of pupils such as lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils.

Ofsted's guidance to inspectors suggests that they should look at the following:

<i>In primary schools whether</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils ever hear anyone use the word 'gay' when describing something, or whether they have been told by teachers that using the word 'gay', to mean something is rubbish, is wrong, scary or unpleasant and why it is wrong
<i>In secondary schools, the above and whether</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is any homophobic bullying, anti-gay derogatory language or name calling in school or on social media sites
<i>With senior leaders whether</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are aware of any instances of homophobic or transphobic language in school, whether this is recorded and how it is acted upon • there is any homophobic language used against staff • the school's bullying and safeguarding policies and equality objectives address gender identity and sexuality • training has been provided for staff in how to tackle homophobic/transphobic bullying, including language • policies promote safety for all groups of pupils regardless of sexuality or gender identity, including the use of language

Schools' efforts to tackle homophobic language are increasingly cited in Ofsted reports. Since the new framework was introduced, around 25 per cent of secondary school inspections mention the school's efforts to tackle homophobia.

In practice

Ofsted recently commented that the pupils at **Cannock Chase High School** are 'very aware of the school's approach to tackling homophobic language and the relevant policy. They talk confidently about homophobic language and how it is unacceptable in the school. Pupils are aware why it is wrong, and see it as another part of the 'respect' agenda at the school'.

Ofsted's 2012 report *No Place for Bullying* contains further guidance on how to tackle homophobic bullying and language.

What the law says In Scotland

Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence framework is designed to meet the needs of all learners aged 3-18 years to enable them to develop four capacities of successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. It emphasises the importance of nurturing learners to help them develop the knowledge and skills they need for positive mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing at school and in their everyday lives which will be sustained into adult life.

Getting it Right for Every Child

The Getting it Right for Every Child approach promotes action to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people underpinned by shared principles and values in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 2010 the Scottish Government published **The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People**. Its main aims are:

-
- Develop positive relationships amongst children, young people, and adults which are mutually respectful, responsible and trusting; and promote their emotional health and wellbeing
 - Build capacity and resilience and skills in children and young people, parents and carers, to prevent and deal with bullying
 - Prevent bullying of children and young people through a range of policies, strategies and approaches
 - Support young people affected by bullying and their parents/carers
-

Education Scotland

Education Scotland provides the inspections framework in Scotland. They also inspect the education functions of local authorities. Scotland's inspections framework is based on 10 principles, one of which is Equality and Diversity.

What the law says In Wales

Welsh Government

The Welsh Government guidance *Respecting others: Homophobic bullying* is clear that 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 learners. Schools have a duty to do this under Section 175 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

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.

Education and Inspections Act

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on school governing bodies in England and Wales to promote the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in their care. This includes lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. Homophobic language has a proven negative impact on the wellbeing of these young people and as such, schools have a responsibility to tackle it.

The Act also gives head teachers the ability to respond to incidents that take place outside school hours, for example on public transport or use of homophobic language on the internet.

Estyn

Estyn's inspection guidance expects that schools' work on bullying, harassment and discrimination will include how to prevent and eliminate homophobia. Inspectors will evaluate the arrangements for dealing with discrimination, harassment and bullying alongside the Common Inspection Framework.



Lesson Ideas

‘Breaking habits’

This is a fun exercise that encourages young people to break the habit of saying ‘that’s so gay’.

Discuss with pupils how slang words develop and how the meanings of words can change or get lost over time. Then discuss ‘that’s so gay’ and the fact that we started to use the phrase at a time when people really did think being gay was a bad thing, and thought it was fine to equate being gay with rubbish. Then talk about what the word actually means, and how it affects gay people when it’s used in the wrong way.

Ask pupils to brainstorm positive alternatives to ‘that’s so gay’ and then to come up with positive appropriate sentences in which they could use gay.

Use role-plays as a way for young people to try out the alternatives they’ve come up with. Encourage them to act out situations in which they may have said ‘that’s so gay’ before, but to use the new words they have chosen.

Finish the lesson with the key messages the pupils should take away: the proper meaning of the word ‘gay’.

Homophobic language on trial

This exercise is perfect for a English, History, Law or PSHE class.

Ask pupils to take part in a fantasy court case where someone is being prosecuted for posting ‘that’s so gay’ on Facebook underneath a picture of a pair of trainers. Split the pupils into various groups – prosecutor, defendant, defence lawyer, judge and jury. Give each group ten minutes to prepare their case and then ask the pupils to enact a court case.

The court case should give pupils the chance to explore most of the reasons why using ‘that’s so gay’ is wrong. Finish the session by discussing how the right to free speech is balanced against hate crime and homophobic language.

Who am I?

This exercise helps young people view the world in 'other people's shoes'.

Develop a list of attributes that make us different – whether it's someone who is gay, has a gay sibling, has a disability, has a single parent, is from an ethnic minority background etc.

Each student should be assigned a different person and told to try to view the world from their perspective. Pupils could devise and act out role-plays based on their characters, or create stories.

At the end, pupils should come together to discuss the labels, and think about how people would feel if one of these attributes was used negatively (such as gay used to mean bad). Pupils should draw the conclusion that making someone's identity into something negative is wrong.

In practice

A class at **Southend School for Girls** made pairs of spectacles which had a different label and the pupils tried to see the world from these perspectives, such as 'you are a student who has a disability' and 'you are a pupil who is gay'. This reduced stigma and stereotypes, highlighting how gay people may feel when gay is used to mean bad.

How do we stop it?

This exercise helps young people come up with ways that they can respond to homophobic language.

Split the class into groups and give each group a role-play where someone uses the word gay inappropriately. For instance someone says that a t-shirt is gay, or someone tells their friend to stop being gay. Encourage the pupils to work as a group to decide how they would respond and ask them to share these responses with each other. Ask pupils to think about why they don't normally respond like this when people use homophobic language and what stops them from doing 'the right thing'. Make a list of all of these barriers and then ask the pupils as a group to think of ways to overcome them. For instance a pupil might say 'I'm worried about making myself unpopular', to which the response could be that if everyone starts challenging homophobic language then it's the people who use homophobic language who are unpopular, not those who try and stop it.

By the end, pupils should feel more confident to respond to homophobic language and know how to do it.

9

Problem solving

Developing robust policies, practices and procedures

Staff think that challenging homophobic language will take too much time or isn't really a problem in the school.

DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE CLEAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ON TACKLING HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE?

NO

YES

Arrange a staff meeting to explain how homophobic language affects young people and to answer any questions or concerns. Remind staff of the school's commitment to equality and of their responsibility to make sure pupils feel safe. Refer to relevant policies and reassure staff that they will be supported to do this work. **DOES THIS HELP?**

NO

YES

Staff sometimes feel that homophobic language is just 'harmless banter'. Once they understand that homophobic language can affect any young person and how serious the consequences can be they are more likely to challenge it.

Staff will feel more able, and confident, to tackle homophobic language if the school has an explicit zero-tolerance policy and universal procedures to follow.

Reassure staff that the use of homophobic language in school will quickly drop off if the whole school takes a zero-tolerance approach. Tell staff about other schools that have successfully done this work and how they've done it, for instance through assemblies, poster displays and lessons. **DOES THIS HELP?**

YES

Staff can be concerned that clamping down on homophobic language might encourage pupils to use it more. Demonstrating that other schools have succeeded in reducing instances will help to allay their concerns, as well as giving them ideas for their own teaching.

NO

Remind staff that irrespective of their own views on tackling homophobia, refusing to comply with school policies and procedures will result in disciplinary action. Reiterate the fact that the school has a legal obligation under the Equality Act and other legislation to tackle this language and that it is something that inspectors expect of the school.

Pupils say they don't mean gay like that

A pupil says, 'you're so gay' to another pupil.

DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE A POLICY WHICH CLEARLY STATES THAT HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE IS UNACCEPTABLE?

NO

YES

Tell the pupil that homophobic language is unacceptable. Explain why homophobic language is hurtful and offensive, making sure that the pupil knows the actual meaning of the word 'gay'.

DOES THE PUPIL UNDERSTAND?

NO

The pupil continues to use the word 'gay' in a negative way, as does the rest of the class. Explain in more detail the effect that homophobic language can have on other people and that just like racist language, it is unacceptable.

DOES IT STOP?

NO

YES

You may have to remind them again but pupils will start to understand why homophobic language is unacceptable. Often pupils don't realise that using the word 'gay' in a negative way is offensive and will stop once they do.

YES

Most pupils know that racism is unacceptable and once the comparison has been made, they will start to understand that using homophobic language is exactly the same.

Staff will be able to respond to homophobic language more effectively if there are policies which young people can be reminded of.

Remove the pupil from the classroom and talk to them in more detail about their behaviour and why it's offensive. Explain the sanctions that will apply if they continue to use homophobic language. **DOES THIS HELP?**

NO

Set the pupil a remedial activity such as writing an essay about why homophobic language is hurtful and refer them to a member of the senior leadership team for further sanctions. **DOES THIS HELP?**

YES

Having sanctions for repeated use of homophobic bullying sends out the message that homophobic language is unacceptable and makes young people think more carefully about using it.

YES

Involving senior leadership communicates the seriousness with which the school treats homophobic language and makes plain that it is unacceptable throughout the school.

NO

Invite parents in to discuss the pupil's behaviour. Refer to the school's policy and legal duty to look after the wellbeing of all pupils. Most parents understand that all pupils should be able to feel safe at school and will support the school's efforts to create a safe environment.

Parents aren't on board

A group of parents have complained about the school's focus on tackling homophobia. **DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE A POLICY THAT CLEARLY STATES THAT HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE IS UNACCEPTABLE?**



Remind parents that this is a school which respects and celebrates difference. Explain that tackling homophobic language is about looking after the welfare and safety of all young people in the school, but it is not about talking about sex. **HAVE YOU SETTLED THEIR CONCERNS?**



Explain to parents that homophobic language can affect any young person, including their own son or daughter. Send a letter home outlining the school's approach and reassure parents that they will be kept up to date with what the school is doing. **DOES THIS HELP?**



Often parents worry that work around tackling homophobia is about sex. When the work is explained, most parents will agree that all young people should be able to feel safe and included at school and will be supportive of the school's efforts to create a culture of respect.



Being open with parents about exactly what the school is doing, and why, will usually settle most concerns. All parents want to know that their own child will feel safe at school and want them to respect others too.

Teachers can respond to parents' concerns much more easily if there is a clear policy. Letting parents know about a school's policy before starting work to tackle homophobia and encouraging them to sign up to it will prevent most complaints.

Invite parents in to discuss their concerns with senior leadership. Have relevant policies and lesson plans ready to show them. Talk about how parents can challenge homophobic language at home too. **ARE PARENTS ON-BOARD?**

NO

Be clear that the school will continue to challenge homophobic language. Explain that the law and Ofsted both support and require the school to tackle homophobic language and reiterate that tackling prejudice and respecting difference of all kinds are a fundamental part of the school's ethos.

YES

Involving senior leadership reassures parents that their concerns are taken seriously, but also sends a strong message that the commitment to tackling homophobic language extends across the school.

In reality, very few parents will continue to object once they understand why the school is tackling homophobic language and that the school has legal obligations to meet. Stand your ground and explain that if they disagree with the school's ethos they should send their children to another school.

10

Top ten tips

1 GET THE BASICS RIGHT

In order to tackle homophobic language successfully, schools should have a policy that makes clear that the use of such language is unacceptable, with sanctions for its use. Involving pupils in writing the policy helps to get their buy-in.

2 CHALLENGE CONSISTENTLY

All staff should challenge homophobic language every time it's heard. This includes derogatory phrases such as 'fag', 'no homo' and 'that's so gay' and 'you're so gay' whether directed at a pupil or object.

3 EXPLAIN THE IMPACT

Teachers shouldn't just ban the word 'gay'. They should explain to pupils what the word actually means and why it's important to use it the right way.

4 SUPPORT STAFF

The biggest barrier to tackling homophobic language is a lack of staff training and confidence. Ensure your staff know why and how to tackle homophobic language. This requires school leaders to be proactive in demonstrating their commitment to tackling homophobic language.

5 COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS

Many young people pick up the use of homophobic language outside the school environment. Communicating work around tackling homophobic language to parents will encourage them to tackle young people's use of homophobic language in the home, meaning it will be less likely to follow them into the classroom.

6 MEASURE PROGRESS

Schools should record incidents of homophobic language to identify any hotspots in friendship or year groups that require specific intervention. Recording and reporting incidents also allows schools to evaluate the success of their work and decide what further initiatives are required.

7 ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE

There are many ways that schools can engage young people in work to tackle homophobic bullying. Displaying Stonewall's *Gay. Let's Get Over it.* posters can help to stimulate discussion and encourage young people to think about their use of language.

8 LET STUDENTS LEAD THE WAY

The schools that most successfully tackle homophobic language are those where pupils become self-policing. Stonewall's *Gay. Get Over It!* guide provides pupils with ideas on how to stop their classmates from using homophobic language.

9 CELEBRATE DIFFERENCE

Lessons, assemblies and presentations which not only challenge use of language but actively communicate positive messages about diversity encourage young people to think that difference is something to be celebrated and make them less likely to use homophobic language.

10 DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

Tackling homophobic language can appear daunting at first, but lots of schools are already doing it successfully. Learn from what they've done and share best practice. Stonewall's Train the Trainer seminars help schools do just that.

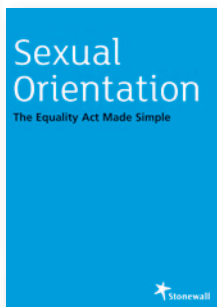
11

Resources

Visit www.stonewall.org.uk/educationresources to order all of Stonewall's education resources. Let us know what you think of our materials at education@stonewall.org.uk



Left: *Gay. Get Over It!* guide for pupils on tackling homophobic language. Below: *Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!* posters, postcards and stickers. Posters are also available in a range of different languages.



*Sexual Orientation
The Equality Act
Made Simple*

Gay. Let's get over it posters which challenge homophobic language



Stonewall's training DVDs for primary and secondary school teachers: *Celebrating Difference* and *Spell It Out*



FIT DVD A film for secondary school students that tackles the issue of homophobic bullying



So...you think your child is gay?
Answers to some of the common questions parents and carers might have when they think their child is gay, or has just come out



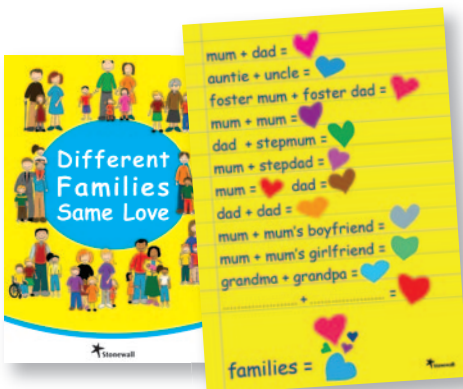
The Teachers' Report (2009): YouGov polling of over 2,000 primary and secondary school staff about homophobic bullying



The School Report: The experiences of gay young people in Britain's schools in 2012



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



Different Families posters help schools to celebrate difference



Education Guides – including *Working with faith communities*; *Including different families*; *Effective school leadership*; *Primary best practice guide* and *Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people*

12

The case studies

The best practice case study examples in this guide are taken from 15 schools, local authorities and academy trusts from across the country. Without the contributions from these Stonewall School and Education Champions and the excellent work they have been doing, this guide would not have been possible. We'd like to thank them. They are:

Wiltshire Council

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Herts for Learning Ltd, *Hertfordshire County Council's preferred partner for the delivery of school improvement services*

Perry Beeches Academy Trust, Birmingham

Derby Moor Community Sports College and the Millennium Sixth Form Centre, Derby

Madeley High School, Staffordshire

Southend High School for Girls, Southend-on-sea

Rokeby School, London Borough of Newham

Chew Valley School, Bath and North East Somerset

Cannock Chase High School, Staffordshire

Best Start Primary Federation, London Borough of Hackney

Alfred Salter Primary School, London Borough of Southwark

Holbrook Primary School, Wiltshire

Dalmain Primary School, London Borough of Lewisham





Stonewall's Youth Volunteering Programme is a free six month programme which gives young people the training and support to run campaigns tackling homophobia in schools, colleges and universities www.youngstonewall.org.uk



Get in touch with Stonewall

Everything we do is based on meeting the needs of schools, teachers and young people. Please do get in touch with us to share your experiences and tell us what you think about our materials.



Stonewall

education@stonewall.org.uk

08000 50 20 20

www.stonewall.org.uk/atschool

www.facebook.com/stonewalluk

Twitter: [@stonewalluk](https://twitter.com/stonewalluk)

www.youtube.com/user/stonewalluk



Stonewall Cymru

education@stonewallcymru.org.uk

addysg@stonewallcymru.org.uk

08000 50 20 20

www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/atschool

www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/ynyrysgol

www.facebook.com/stonewallcymru

Twitter: [@stonewallcymru](https://twitter.com/stonewallcymru)

www.youtube.com/user/stonewallcymru



Stonewall Scotland

education@stonewallscotland.org.uk

0131 474 8019

www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/atschool

www.facebook.com/stonewallscotland

Twitter: [@stonewallscot](https://twitter.com/stonewallscot)

Tackling homophobic language

