

HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING at Somerville Federation



03b - Anti bullying policy additional information

Somerville Federation

Approved by Governors: February 2016

Reviewed: January 2017

Next Review Date: January 2018

This is a summary of DCSF guidance and should be followed in accordance with our 03a - anti bullying policy and LA guidance.

Introduction

A brief summary of the guidance outline follows below:

What is homophobic bullying?

Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bi-sexual people.

Who experiences homophobic bullying?

- Young people who are lesbian, gay or bi-sexual or who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bi-sexual.
- Young people who are different in some way – who may not act like other girls and boys.
- Young people who have gay friend or family or whose parents/carers are gay.
- Teachers who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bi-sexual.

Who does the bullying and why?

- Anyone. Especially if they have not been told it's wrong.
- People who think lesbian and gay people should be bullied because they believe gay people are 'wrong.'
- People who might be gay themselves and are angry about that.
- People who think girls and boys should conform rigidly to gender stereotypes.
- People who think gay people shouldn't have the same rights as heterosexual people and who use this to justify bullying.
- People who think gay parenting is wrong and that pupils should be treated differently because of it.

Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 schools have a legal duty to ensure homophobic bullying is dealt with but that is not the only reason to tackle it.

Homophobic bullying can have a negative impact on young people.

- Seven out of ten lesbian and gay people say homophobic bullying affects their work.
- Bullying can be linked to poor attendance and absenteeism.
- Bullying can cause low self esteem and the increased likelihood of self harm and contemplation of suicide.
- Pupils who experience bullying are unlikely to fulfil the objectives of Every Child Matters.

What does homophobic bullying look like?

It can be hard to identify as it may be going on in secret. A recent study found that three in five gay pupils never tell anyone. **Pupils may be reluctant to disclose incidents because they fear staff will assume they are gay.** Generally homophobic bullying looks like other forms of bullying but can include:

- **Verbal abuse** – spreading rumours that someone is gay, suggesting that someone or something is inferior for being ‘gay.’
- **Physical abuse** – hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault and threatening behaviour.
- **Cyberbullying** – spreading rumours online or excluding them. Text messaging, video and picture messaging.

Can it happen in primary schools?

YES. Pupils may not know what the words mean but can use homophobic language to bully.

IMPORTANT FOR ALL STAFF AT SOMERVILLE FEDERATION TO FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE BELOW:

How to respond to homophobic bullying?

The response should be in line with Ofsted guidelines and be ‘swift, proportionate, discreet, influential and effective.’

Responding to homophobic language

Casual homophobic language is common in schools. Pupils can think this is acceptable if it is not challenged.

- Pupils should know that homophobic language is offensive and will not be tolerated in either of our schools.
- If a pupil makes or continues to make homophobic remarks explain in detail the effects of homophobic bullying on people.

- If a pupil makes persistent remarks they should be removed from the classroom and staff should talk to the pupil in more detail about why their comments are unacceptable.
- If the problem persists involve senior managers, ensure the pupil knows that sanctions will apply if they continue to use homophobic language. Consider inviting the pupil's parents or carers to school to discuss their behaviour.

Responding to physical bullying

- Homophobic violence is a crime. Anti-bullying policies should be rigorously enforced to keep pupils safe from physical abuse. Teachers should refer to the 'hierarchy of sanctions.' In severe cases permanent exclusion should be considered.

Preventing homophobic bullying

Our Federation will promote the following ten steps to work towards an inclusive school environment using a whole school approach.

1. **Acknowledge and identify the problem of bullying** – recognise that all sorts of bullying takes place in schools, even if not immediately visible.
2. **Recognise the existence of homophobic bullying** – ensure that your anti-bullying policy takes homophobic bullying into account. Challenge pupil's use of the word 'gay.'
3. **Promote a positive social environment** – all pupils should be supported by the entire Federation community regardless of their differences.
4. **Address staff training needs** – ensure that all staff are confident in knowing how to respond to homophobic bullying.
5. **Provide information and support for pupils** – make information about support services available to all pupils.
6. **Include addressing homophobic bullying in curriculum planning** – help pupils understand diversity by teaching about homophobic bullying in an age appropriate way.
7. **Feel able to use outside expertise** – External agencies such as lesbian or gay charities can offer support by addressing homophobic bullying in school.
8. **Encourage role models** – openly gay staff, governors, parents, carers and or pupils can be strong role models in school.
9. **Do not make assumptions** – do not assume that: all pupils and staff are heterosexual, all pupils experiencing homophobic bullying are gay.
10. **Celebrate achievements** – make successes known such as updating the school anti-bullying policy, reducing bullying through lesson time, newsletters, websites etc.