



## **Celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion**

Good practice in supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners in schools and colleges

October 2020 (Updated June 2025)

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## Introduction

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This report focuses on effective support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners, as well as those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. It highlights good practice in creating school and college cultures that celebrate diversity, prioritise inclusion and address LGBT issues in a development-appropriate manner. The report is intended for the Welsh Government, headteachers and staff in schools, PRUs, colleges, local authorities and regional consortia.

The report draws on evidence from inspection reports and from visits to a selection of schools and further education colleges across Wales where inspections, or the work of regional consortia, have identified particularly strong provision for LGBT learners. It includes case studies and examples of effective practice throughout. Some schools used as examples in this report have not been named because of the sensitive nature of the case concerned. See Appendix 2 for further details of the evidence base.

This report has been amended in a few places in June 2025 (originally published October 2020) to ensure it remains relevant in the context of the latest legal and policy developments in this area.

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## Terminology

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Throughout this report, we use the following terminology to refer to LGBT identities:

- The terms **lesbian**, **gay** and **bisexual** describe some people's 'sexual orientation'. Sexual orientation is a person's emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to another person.
- **Lesbian** means a woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards women.
- **Gay** means a man who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards men. It is also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality, and some women identify as gay rather than lesbian.
- **Bisexual** (or bi) means a person who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards people of either sex.
- **Transgender** is a word that describes those people whose personal sense of gender identity does not sit comfortably with their biological sex.

In this report the term LGBT can also be understood to refer to those questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity and to those who identify as variants of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.



## Background and research

### The legislative framework

In 2003, the UK government repealed Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. This legislation stated that a local authority ‘shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality’ nor, ‘promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship’ (Great Britain, 1988). Subsequent legislation redressed the negative effect of this clause on the inclusion of LGBT pupils and placed specific duties on public bodies, including schools and local authorities, in relation to LGBT people. In particular, the Equality Act 2010 provides the key legislation that underpins policy and guidance at UK and Welsh government levels. It defines nine ‘protected characteristics’ and makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation (Great Britain, 2010).

In 1991, the UK Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The rights contained in the Convention are interdependent and indivisible, but the content of Article 2 is particularly relevant to LGBT issues, setting out the right for every child to be free from discrimination ‘irrespective of... race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status’ (United Nations, 1989). The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 places a duty on Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the rights and obligations within the UNCRC and its optional protocols.

In April 2025, the judgement of *For Women Scotland Ltd (Appellant) v The Scottish Ministers (Respondent)* was published. This judgement clarified that for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, the terms ‘woman’, ‘man’, and ‘sex’ refer to biological woman, biological man and biological sex. Estyn is aware of the implications that this judgment has on separate and same sex spaces i.e. that access to single sex facilities, such as toilets or changing rooms, must be based on biological sex, not gender identity, and that schools should consider alternative arrangements to support transgender pupils as necessary. Schools can find the latest guidance relating to the judgement on the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Sexual orientation, sex and gender reassignment all remain characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Transgender pupils remain protected under the Equality Act 2010

by virtue of their gender reassignment characteristic; they remain protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation based on actual, perceived or association with gender reassignment.

It remains important that the safety and safeguarding against harm of all pupils, including transgender pupils is fostered across schools. This report contains findings and practice that schools and colleges may wish to consider when reviewing their provision. It is the duty of schools and colleges to take into account each limb of their Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010), particularly when determining whether to introduce new practices or procedures in relation to those with protected characteristics, such as sex or gender reassignment. Schools and colleges are also under an obligation to ensure appropriate and effective action is taken to remove or minimise disadvantages encountered by learners due to their having protected characteristics. Each individual school, college or practitioner should undertake their own review of this good practice document and determine whether any of the practices referred to could be relevant or appropriate for their organisation. If in doubt, the provider should seek independent legal or other specialist advice.

## Additional reports and guidance

In addition to specific legislation, the Welsh Government and other organisations have published reports and guidance that underpin the work of many effective providers.

Welsh Government guidance on ‘Inclusion and Pupil Support’ (2006, updated 2016) highlights that some pupils may require extra support to enable them to understand fully their feelings on their sexual orientation or gender identity and to deal with the negative views of others. It suggests that LGBT pupils and those questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation are more likely to be the target of bullying. Additional guidance on tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying (Welsh Government, 2011) addressed this more specifically. The Welsh Government renewed its overall approach to bullying with a suite of guidance for schools, parents, local authorities and young people (Welsh Government, 2019c). This includes statutory guidance for schools that expects learners who are LGBT, or are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, to ‘be carefully considered in a school’s bullying prevention strategy’ (Welsh Government, 2019b, p.23).

In 2019, the Welsh Government (2019a) consulted on draft guidance on relationships and sexuality education. This emphasises the importance of ensuring that ‘practitioners and learners recognise relationship and sexual diversity and show respect for others regardless of their gender identity and expression or sexual orientation’ (Welsh Government, 2019a, p.7). It is the intention of the Welsh Government that relationships and sexuality education will be compulsory for all pupils when the new curriculum is introduced in 2022 and the right for parents to exclude their children from related lessons will be removed.

Stonewall have published extensive guidance for primary and secondary schools and colleges of further education tackling a variety of issues related to LGBT learners. This includes guidance on tackling homophobic bullying (Stonewall 2016a, 2016b), how to create an inclusive school or college environment (2018a), challenging stereotypes in the early years (2017a) and tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language (Stonewall, 2019).

The Youth Work Strategy for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019e) sets out the requirement for local authority youth services, the voluntary sector and schools and colleges to work more closely together to provide better support for young people. This provides the policy context for joint working between informal, non-formal and formal education providers for the provision of services that address young people’s needs, including those young people who identify as LGBT.

## Research findings

Research paints a bleak picture of school life for many LGBT pupils. For example, Stonewall’s ‘School Report’ (2017c) draws on an online questionnaire completed by 3,713 LGBT young people aged 11-19 from across the UK. This highlights the challenges that many LGBT pupils face in terms of their experience of bullying, how well schools respond to this and the extent to which schools address LGBT issues as part of the curriculum. The 2017 report indicates slow improvements in these areas since Stonewall’s previous reports in 2007 and 2012.

- The 2017 report indicates that 45% of LGBT pupils experience homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying compared to 55% in 2012 and 65% in 2007.
- 40% of pupils state that schools have not taught them about LGBT issues, compared to 53% in 2012, and 70% in 2007 (Stonewall, 2017c, p.8).

Poor mental health remains prevalent in LGBT pupils across the UK:

- The 2017 report states that 61% of LGBT pupils have self-harmed, compared with 56% in 2012.
- 22% of LGBT pupils have attempted to take their own life, which remains similar to the figure of 23% in 2012 (Stonewall, 2017c, p.8).

In Wales, Stonewall's 'School Report Cymru' (2017b) drew on the results of an online questionnaire completed by 267 LGBT pupils. The report found that around half of LGBT pupils in Wales, including many transgender pupils, experience bullying for being LGBT. Around half of these pupils state that they do not report it to anyone and only a minority suggest that teachers intervene if they are present when the bullying occurs. A majority of LGBT pupils in Wales say that there is not an adult at school they can talk to about being LGBT. The same proportion of transgender pupils indicate that staff at their school are not familiar with the term 'trans' and what it means. More than half of LGBT pupils are not taught anything about LGBT issues during their time at school. The report suggests that LGBT pupils are more likely to experience poor levels of wellbeing. Around half of LGBT pupils have stayed away from school as a result of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. Many transgender pupils have deliberately harmed themselves at some point and under half of them have attempted to take their own life. A majority of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who are not transgender have self-harmed and a minority have tried to take their own life (Stonewall, 2017b, pp.20-21).

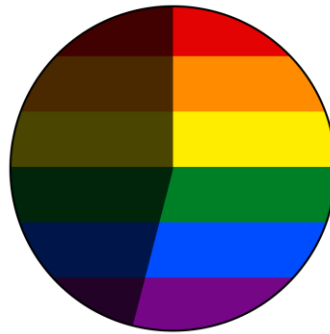




**Figure 1: Findings of Stonewall's 'School Report Cymru' (2017)**

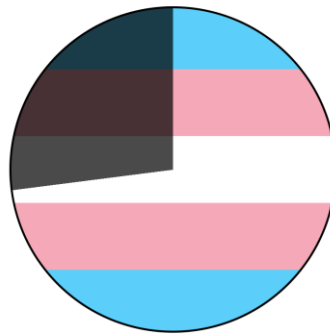
**54%**

of LGBT pupils experience bullying for being LGBT.



**73%**

of trans pupils experience bullying for being trans.



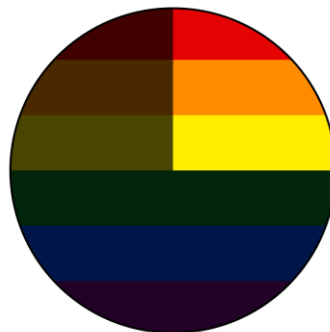
**47%**

of these pupils state that they do not report it to anyone.



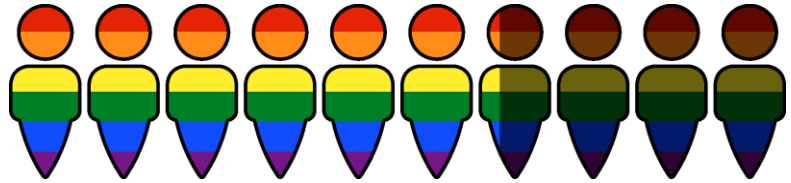
**25%**

suggest that teachers intervene if they are present when bullying occurs.



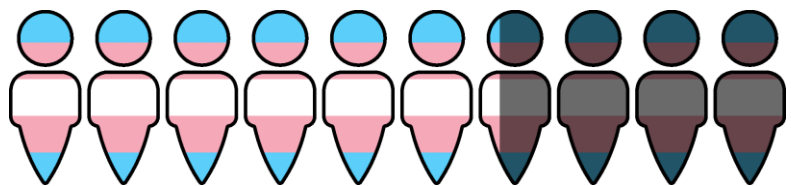
# 62%

of LGBT pupils in Wales say that there is not an adult at school they can talk to about being LGBT.



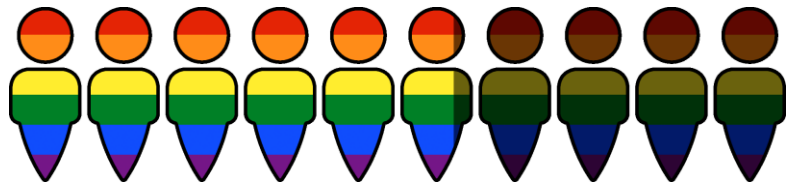
# 62%

of trans pupils indicate that staff at their school are not familiar with the term 'trans' and what it means.



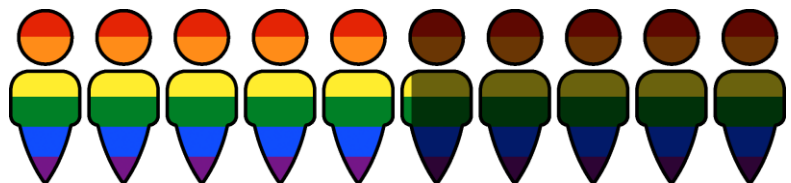
# 58%

of LGBT pupils are not taught anything about LGBT issues during their time at school.



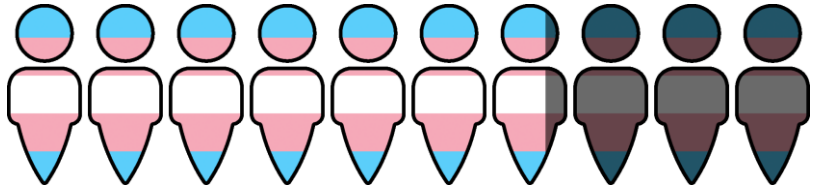
# 51%

of LGBT pupils have stayed away from school as a result of HBT bullying.



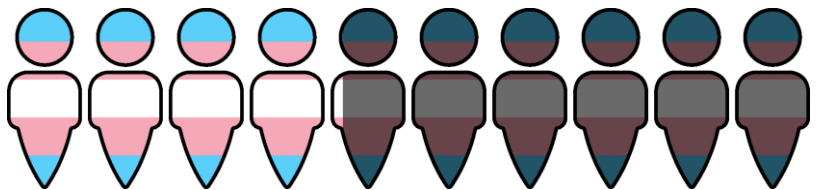
# 77%

of trans pupils have deliberately harmed themselves at some point.



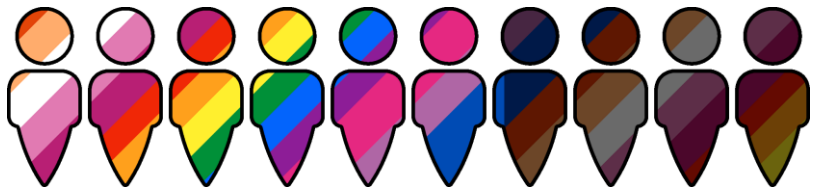
# 41%

of trans pupils have attempted to take their own life.



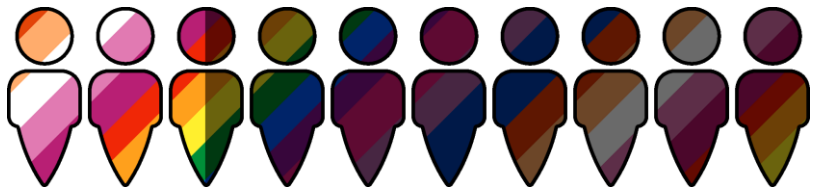
# 61%

of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who are not transgender have self-harmed.



# 25%

of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who are not transgender have tried to take their own life.



There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the educational experience for LGBT learners and to ensure that all learners receive a better education around LGBT issues. For example, the 'No Outsiders' project (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009) supported 15 primary teachers working in three regions across the UK over 28 months to develop action research projects that address LGBT equality in their own schools and classrooms. Teachers based their projects around four agreed guiding principles for LGBT education:

1. It must be voluntary and teacher-centred.
2. It must be publicly supported and recognised by powerful government and educational bodies.
3. It must be collective and involve strong collegial support.
4. It must be informed by expertise and supplied with resources.

In 'Bullying, cussing and mucking about' (Warwick and Aggleton, 2014), the authors discuss how three secondary schools in south London are addressing homophobia. Key findings suggest that most staff see work on homophobia and homophobic bullying to be part of a general commitment to countering bullying, that pupils express a desire for homophobic bullying to be tackled and distinguish bullying from swearing or 'mucking about'. The article emphasises the importance of tackling homophobic bullying not just through reacting to instances as they arise, but by ensuring improvements to the quality of teaching and learning around LGBT issues. The authors conclude by suggesting that solutions to tackling homophobic bullying are already to be found in many schools, noting:

*'While there are many schools in which homophobia and homophobic bullying continue to affect young people ... there are also young people and teachers – not necessarily lesbian or gay themselves – who resist and counter homophobia and the harm it causes. Both professionally and politically, we should be minded to acknowledge, to learn from and to make more widely known what such young people and teachers are successfully accomplishing'* (Warwick and Aggleton, 2014, pp.170-1).

Stonewall's 'Primary best practice guide' (2018b) highlights good practice from around the UK. It emphasises the importance of leaders creating an ethos that shows the school takes homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying seriously and gives staff the confidence to deal with it robustly. It stresses the importance of involving pupils in developing the school's approach and ensuring that staff receive relevant training to recognise and combat homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying as it arises. The report links work on LGBT issues with wider aspects around inclusion and respect, and provides guidance to schools on how to create an inclusive curriculum that addresses same-sex relationships in a development-appropriate way, for instance through the use of storybooks. It provides guidance on ways to challenge gender stereotyping and celebrate difference, and encourages schools to engage with parents to explain their approach to promoting inclusion.



## Main findings

### Where provision is most effective

- 1 In schools and colleges with a strong culture of inclusion, LGBT learners thrive. In these cases, they feel as confident as their peers to express their feelings and beliefs. They enjoy a strong sense of wellbeing and play a full part in the life of the school or college.
- 2 In these schools or colleges, nearly all learners view sexual orientation as another form of diversity to be celebrated along with other protected characteristics, such as race, religion, sex and disability.
- 3 These schools and colleges review their curriculum to incorporate LGBT issues in a development-appropriate way to good effect. As a result, learners regularly see positive LGBT role models depicted through their learning experiences and in their school or college environment.
- 4 The school or college engages actively with parents and the wider community, including faith groups, to ensure that they understand the organisation's approach to celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion. They recognise that some stakeholders may challenge this and listen and take account of differing views, but ultimately act in the best interests of learners.
- 5 Leaders ensure that the curriculum and learning environment challenge gender stereotypes and tackle related issues as they arise. Learners begin to understand the negative effect of gender stereotyping from a young age.
- 6 Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying is infrequent and dealt with robustly when it arises. Leaders work with staff and learners to develop their anti-bullying policy and procedures to ensure they recognise, record and address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. They create an environment where staff and learners feel confident to challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and the use of homophobic language.
- 7 Leaders put in place effective systems to ensure that learners know how to approach speaking to a member of staff about personal issues, including those related to LGBT issues and 'coming out'. They ensure that specific pastoral staff have the skills and knowledge to support learners to make safe decisions, but also that all staff have the confidence to respond to the questions and concerns around LGBT matters raised by learners.
- 8 Pupil and learner voice groups provide a valuable support network for LGBT young people. In the best cases, they provide valuable feedback to schools and colleges on the experience of LGBT learners. Leaders consider this information carefully to adjust their policies and curriculum to improve the educational experience of LGBT learners and promote inclusion for all.

- 9 Schools and colleges liaise well with parents and carers and, in appropriate circumstances, medical practitioners to address the challenges faced by transgender learners, those who are questioning their gender identity and those who are transitioning. They recognise that there is no standard or simple solution to these challenges, and there is a need for flexibility and dialogue with all involved.
- 10 Where provision is strongest, in around a third of schools and in most colleges, leaders demonstrate a clear moral purpose towards promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity. They establish an ethos that champions individuality, tolerance and respect. This impacts on the wellbeing of all learners positively. In the most inclusive schools and colleges, LGBT staff feel able to discuss their personal lives and relationships with pupils and colleagues within guidelines that apply equally to LGBT and heterosexual staff.
- 11 Leaders prioritise consideration of learners' wellbeing and mental health in their self-evaluation arrangements. They use the information they gather to consider provision for LGBT learners and how well their curriculum and learning environment encourages the celebration of diversity and promotes inclusion. The gathering of the views of all learners, particularly those who are LGBT, plays an important part in this.
- 12 Leaders ensure professional learning for all staff that develops their skills, knowledge and confidence to support LGBT learners and assists in creating an inclusive ethos. Frequently, this involves input from specialist external partners, including providing training for specific staff that allows them to deliver professional learning to colleagues within their own organisation.

### Where provision is less strong

- 13 In these cases, LGBT learners encounter varying levels of bullying and discrimination that impact negatively on their school and college experience leading to poorer attendance and slower academic progress than their peers.
- 14 Learners in general do not see positive LGBT role models as part of their curriculum or around their school or college. This increases the likelihood that they will develop negative views of LGBT people and that LGBT learners will not appreciate that they can be equally successful as others.
- 15 Addressing LGBT issues is a bolt-on part of the school or college's provision, for example with teachers addressing them only as part of personal and social education (PSE) sessions. This may reinforce the sense that LGBT people are a special issue that needs discussing rather than part of everyday life.
- 16 Leaders do not ensure that instances of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are recorded or that trends are identified and acted upon or ensure that staff engage in high quality professional learning that provides them with the confidence to support LGBT learners.

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## Recommendations

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### **Schools and colleges should:**

- R1 Review their curriculum and individual course content to consider how well the teaching of diversity and inclusion, including LGBT issues, is integrated into learning experiences
- R2 Ensure that instances of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are recorded and that trends are identified and acted upon
- R3 Ensure that all staff engage in regular training in addressing discrimination and promoting diversity, including issues around LGBT people

### **Local authorities and consortia should:**

- R4 Work with external partners to deliver relevant professional learning opportunities for staff in schools across primary and secondary sectors
- R5 Work with primary and secondary schools to ensure progression in relationships and sexuality education between sectors

## 1 The experience of LGBT learners in schools and colleges

- 17 In schools and colleges where there is strong history of celebrating diversity and supporting inclusion, LGBT learners and those questioning their gender or sexual orientation thrive. In these cases, schools and colleges play an important role in ensuring that children and young people receive the support they need and that they have access to adults who have the confidence and skills to discuss issues relevant to LGBT learners. These schools help learners to develop resilience and support them to tackle the prejudice they experience in wider society. In these schools and colleges, instances of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are rare.
- 18 Many of the schools and colleges we visited for this report create a strong culture of inclusion where diversity is celebrated. In these providers, LGBT learners feel equally confident as their peers in expressing their sexual orientation and gender identity. They enjoy a strong sense of wellbeing and play a full part in the life of the school or college.
- 19 Most colleges work well to ensure a positive environment for LGBT learners. For example, they display materials that promote LGBT issues and celebrate LGBT month with activities to raise awareness of this community. Many college staff wear rainbow lanyards to demonstrate their support for the LGBT community and senior managers support pupils' involvement in Pride events. In many colleges leaders include LGBT issues in their strategic planning, for example ensuring induction for learners and new staff covers LGBT issues and related support. In these cases, LGBT learners feel at ease in expressing their sexual and gender identity and confident in talking to staff when they have problems or concerns.
- 20 Where schools prioritise inclusion as part of their curriculum, pupils regularly see positive LGBT role models through their learning experiences and depicted around the school. They understand that LGBT people can be as successful as heterosexual people. This helps to improve the confidence and aspirations of LGBT pupils. In many of the primary schools we visited, the portrayal of same-sex relationships is an integral part of the school's wider approach to depicting positive images of all protected characteristics. In these cases, there is a greater likelihood that pupils develop an early acceptance of same-sex relationships and, potentially, experience less discomfort if questioning their own sexuality as they grow older.
- 21 In schools that ensure that there are effective systems for pupils to raise personal matters and that staff are confident in addressing issues around sexual orientation and gender identity, LGBT pupils feel comfortable approaching members of staff for advice and guidance. In a minority of the secondary schools we visited, all staff receive relevant training and pupils are aware of a number of individuals they may speak to. In effective colleges, many staff wear rainbow lanyards so that learners know that they will be confident in discussing issues related to being LGBT and in a position to provide advice and guidance where needed. In many primary schools, there are systems in place to ensure that pupils are able to find ways to speak to staff about worries, concerns and questions including those related to relationships.



- 22 In a few of the primary schools we visited, pupils engage in activities that attempt to address gender stereotyping from an early age. For example, pupils in Year 2 sort toy adverts from a catalogue into those that reinforce or challenge conventions around the types of toys boys and girls should play with. In continuous and enhanced provision<sup>1</sup>, pupils access independent learning opportunities that do not reinforce stereotypes and pupils engage in whichever activities they feel comfortable with. For example, in the role play area, boys and girls choose freely to dress and play as nurses, construction workers, police officers, plumbers, mechanics and doctors.
- 23 In schools that celebrate diversity and support inclusion well, pupils understand their right to be included and to be free from discrimination whatever their gender identity or sexual orientation, for example through work on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In these schools, leaders ensure a robust approach to tackling bullying, including those related to LGBT issues. In a few schools, pupils recognise and raise concerns over the use of homophobic language when it arises, for example by challenging the use of the word 'gay'. Here, LGBT pupils feel confident in speaking to staff about issues of bullying and feel that the school will address these effectively.

In **Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr**, working under the guidance of the school's equality leader, the Digon (Enough) group has been working effectively and creatively within the school and beyond for nine years to support pupils and challenge negative attitudes towards LGBT people. The school established the group originally to challenge the use of homophobic language by pupils and went on to develop a response strategy for staff. The group created a specific policy and prepared a professional development session for staff on using the strategy consistently.

The group is now well established and meets weekly to provide a safe haven for pupils and a platform for sharing ideas. The group's pupils are available to listen to their peers and signpost them to helpful advice when necessary. Displays by the Digon group promote positive attitudes towards equality across the school, including the use of red and green plates in the school reception that identify what is working well and what more needs to be done to promote equality and fair opportunity for all. During 'Rainbow Week', pupils build a wall full of homophobic vocabulary. The highlight of this week is pupils destroying the wall as a metaphor for tackling negative vocabulary.

The group delivers PSE sessions to the rest of the school, presents assemblies on equality and contributes to external conferences. Members deliver training to teachers and pupils from other schools, including their cluster primary schools, in LGBT equality. The school hosts an annual LGBT equality conference with members of the Digon group taking a leading role in its organisation.

<sup>1</sup> Estyn's publication, '[Active and Experiential Learning](#)' (2017) provides a useful definition of continuous and enhanced provision.

- 24 However, in too many cases across Wales, research suggests that LGBT pupils encounter levels of bullying and discrimination in schools that impact negatively on their school experience leading to poorer attendance and slower academic progress. Many LGBT pupils endure feelings of loneliness and isolation and do not feel that there is an adult within their provider they can talk to about personal issues and, specifically, 'coming out'. The extent of this varies between sectors. In most primary schools, pupils have a positive working relationship with their class teacher and feel confident and comfortable in talking about personal matters including, occasionally, those related to feelings about gender identity and sexual orientation.
- 25 In many schools, pupils do not experience a school culture that champions and celebrates all forms of inclusion and diversity, including those around LGBT issues. Often, pupils will experience positive role models around many of the protected characteristics, such as race, religion, sex or disability, but do not encounter sufficient positive LGBT role models through the curriculum and in the school environment. As a result, many LGBT pupils do not develop a sufficient appreciation that LGBT people can be as successful as others. Too frequently, when pupils have opportunities to engage in learning and discussions around LGBT issues, it is part of specific personal and social education (PSE) lessons and not integrated into the wider curriculum. This may reinforce a sense that LGBT people are 'different' and a 'special issue' that needs discussing, rather than a part of everyday life.

### **Lansdowne Primary School**

Following staff training by pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr, the school began to reflect on LGBT issues. They established a Digon (Enough) pupil voice group and conducted a survey into the use of homophobic language and bullying. This revealed that many pupils had experienced the use of homophobic language, often directed at them as an insult.

The school worked with the Digon group to improve pupils' understanding of the negative impact of the use of this language through presentations in assemblies. The group worked to construct a 'ladder of consequences' linked to homophobic behaviour and became part of the school's system of restorative justice. This involves them working with both victim and perpetrator to resolve issues, and improve understanding and future behaviour.

The group's lead teacher works with the pupils to support peers who are questioning their identity or have family members identifying as LGBT. The group work at tackling stereotyping in school by helping with resources for lessons about differences in family structures and by delivering assemblies.

- 26 Often LGBT pupils do not receive the support they need to cope with the additional pressures they face from wider society, and sometimes from their own families, growing up as a LGBT person. The level of support available for pupils in rural areas is frequently less good than for LGBT pupils in urban areas. Largely, this is the result of a lack of availability of external organisations, such as specific LGBT advice and counselling services, to support staff to address the needs of pupils.
- 27 As a result of these factors and discrimination and intolerance in wider society, LGBT learners are at greater risk of depression and more likely to engage in self-harm or experience suicidal thoughts. The negative experience of transgender pupils is even more acute. They are highly likely to experience some form of bullying during their time at school or college and often feel that staff do not have the skills and understanding to be able to support their needs.

## 2 Ensuring that learning experiences celebrate diversity and promote inclusion

- 28 Many of the schools we visited consider carefully how they can better adapt pupils' learning experiences to address LGBT issues and help ensure that LGBT pupils achieve the progress, standards and levels of wellbeing of which they are capable. In the best cases, schools and colleges adjust existing schemes of work and lesson plans in a development-appropriate way to incorporate LGBT issues and portray LGBT people in everyday life. For example, staff ensure that literature in primary schools covers these aspects and schools participate in events that celebrate diversity. In a few schools, teachers plan opportunities to develop pupils' thinking and reasoning skills when exploring issues of inclusion and discrimination, including those related to LGBT people.

Leaders in **Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd** wanted to improve pupils' oracy skills and embarked on training staff to teach pupils simple philosophy. These sessions provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking and speaking skills through discussing open-ended questions. Pupils grow to understand that there is often more than one answer to a question. Staff encourage pupils' understanding skilfully through a variety of activities that challenge pupils from the nursery upwards to appreciate and think carefully about other people's views, even if they don't agree with them.

Following attendance at a diversity workshop run by Newport local authority, leaders identified an opportunity to use differences in ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation as a context for pupils' discussions in philosophy sessions. They use these to emphasise the school's vision that 'being different is the only thing we have in common'. They also celebrate diversity through community celebration weeks, where pupils develop their empathy for others. Leaders ensure that they keep parents fully informed of the content of the curriculum delivered at school and the priority they place on promoting inclusion and challenging stereotyping.

- 29 Successful schools develop pupils' awareness by starting with what they are familiar with. For example, they start with pupils' own experience of relationships at home, such as having one mum or dad, being brought up by grandparents or those families that have two mums or two dads. They teach pupils about discrimination against LGBT people as part of their overall approach to addressing bullying and embed this in the wider curriculum. For example, pupils in one school learn about the treatment of Alan Turing and the experiences of the rugby player, Gareth Thomas. Where learning experiences are most effective for LGBT pupils, staff make sure that LGBT pupils have a voice in shaping provision.



- 30 Where schools and colleges address LGBT issues successfully as part of their curriculum and wider provision, they form part of the provider's whole-school approach to celebrating and championing all forms of inclusion, such as those based on ethnicity, religious belief and disability. In these schools, teachers skilfully use opportunities to promote positive images of LGBT people as they arise, such as discussing the participation of transgender people on popular television programmes.

In one primary school, teachers plan a variety of learning experiences that teach pupils the importance of inclusion and celebrating diversity from an early age. For example, in the foundation phase, pupils explore how it's okay to be different when creating a pictogram to represent different hair colour. One pupil suggests, 'If we were all the same the world would be boring'. As part of a topic on knights, a pupil writes, 'It doesn't matter if it's a girl or a boy knight. Anyone can be anything'. In a brainstorm for their 'all about me' topic, a child wants to find out why boys don't wear dresses to school. In another class, pupils retell the story of Rosa Parks and write to a character in a book whose father stops him from playing with dolls, because he thinks 'that's not what boys do'. They explore the role of Women in the Second World War as part of marking Remembrance Day.

In key stage 2, a pupil whose mum is in a same-sex relationship celebrates the uniqueness of their family identity when writing about themselves. Pupils celebrate Black History Month by looking at the arrival of Afro-Caribbean migrants from on HMT Empire Windrush. Older pupils explore positive female role models when following the journey of a group of female firefighters in their expedition across the Antarctic. Throughout the school, pupils regularly experience the portrayal of different forms of relationships and challenges to gender stereotyping through development-appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts.

- 31 However, even where schools have begun to recognise the importance of developing pupils' awareness and understanding of LGBT issues, adaptations to the curriculum tend to be limited to PSE lessons rather than taught across all curriculum areas. This is unhelpful in encouraging pupils to develop their understanding that LGBT people exist in all types of families and within all roles in society. It can lead to pupils perceiving LGBT people as an 'issue' rather than part of their everyday community and wider world. In addition, it can limit the opportunities for all staff to develop their understanding of and confidence in talking about LGBT issues.
- 32 In too many schools across Wales, teachers do not consider the specific needs of LGBT pupils and the positive portrayal of LGBT role models well enough when considering the breadth of pupils' learning experiences over time. In many cases, schools miss opportunities to explore LGBT issues in a natural and development-appropriate way through the wider curriculum. This means that pupils do not learn in school about LGBT issues that they are already coming across through the media and in wider society as a whole. For pupils who are LGBT or are

questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, this can lead to many of the negative effects outlined in chapter one.

- 33 In particular, only a very few primary schools have begun to consider how well they portray same-sex relationships and different types of families as part of the wider curriculum. Where they do this successfully, pupils experience portrayals of loving same-sex relationships at a development-appropriate level from an early stage that reflect they see in society and through the media.

In **Lansdowne Primary School**, leaders and teachers are aware of the need to address LGBT issues and gender stereotyping with pupils. Their approach reaches beyond the school's PSE programme and integrates into the wider curriculum to develop pupils' understanding of family structures beyond the traditional nuclear family.

Teachers plan the learning experiences for each year group around a story book. These activities build upon the local authority's PSE scheme and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the diverse nature of society.

In Year 2, pupils study the book 'And Tango Makes Three'. They explore the make-up of families as the two main male characters are penguins who adopt an egg that hatches to form a family of three. This allows adults and pupils to explore their own families in a caring and sensitive way. Pupils talk about having mum and mummy or stepdads in their homes, and further explore other family structures.

In Year 3, pupils are encouraged to explore their own ideas about what girls, boys or both can do. They talk about the examples and careful questioning by teachers helps to challenge their preconceived ideas. Pupils go on to read 'Bill's New Frock' by Anne Fine and discuss how people treat him differently as a girl. They talk about equality and how boys and girls can do the same things.

In Year 6, pupils learn about real-life LGBT issues. Through their topic on the Second World War pupils discover the important role Alan Turing played in cracking the Enigma Code, shortening the war and saving lives. They discover the impact of homophobia when finding out about his persecution in later life and imprisonment for being homosexual. Learning of his posthumous pardon in 2013 helps pupils understand how attitudes to LGBT people have changed in recent times.

### 3 Support for LGBT learners

- 34 Increasingly, effective schools and colleges recognise the need to improve their support for LGBT pupils and those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. These schools understand that the needs of LGBT pupils are often highly specific to the individual. Staff know the importance of not making assumptions about the wants and needs of LGBT pupils and work closely with them to modify provision and provide support.
- 35 Being LGBT does not in itself imply the need for additional support. However, LGBT pupils frequently experience additional challenges compared to their peers as result of negative attitudes and prejudice in wider society. As indicated in chapter one, this can result in a poorer sense of wellbeing, which schools and colleges can help to mitigate through ensuring effective systems that allow pupils to access additional support when they need it.
- 36 In the best cases, secondary schools and colleges employ pastoral staff with expertise or experience in supporting LGBT pupils. They put in place clear systems that ensure pupils know how to go about speaking to a member of staff about personal issues, including those around being LGBT. In nearly all primary schools, pupils develop effective working relationships with their class teacher or other member of staff that allows them to raise and discuss personal matters as they arise. Many schools employ systems, such as 'worry boxes', that enable pupils to confidentially ask for support. A very few primaries operate a drop-in facility for pupils to speak to a member of staff who has been specifically trained in supporting pupils' emotional and wellbeing needs.
- 37 In many of the schools and colleges we visited, leaders recognise the importance of ensuring that all staff have a suitable degree of knowledge, understanding and confidence to be able to speak to learners about issues around coming out or homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying when they arise. This knowledge and confidence among staff helps to create an ethos of inclusion within schools and colleges that enables LGBT learners to feel comfortable to express their individual identity. These schools and colleges use effective links with outside agencies to enable specific support for LGBT learners. This includes training programmes, counselling and support services, and the development of systems that allow confidential access to reliable and accurate information to assist learners in making safe choices.
- 38 Many of the secondary schools and colleges we visited use outside agencies well to facilitate LGBT learner groups that carry out a number of roles. These groups provide peer support for other learners, develop initiatives to promote and celebrate LGBT rights, and, in the best cases, provide feedback to staff on the inclusion of LGBT issues in the curriculum. Where schools and colleges can access these services, they are often effective in enhancing support for LGBT learners. However,

external support services for LGBT learners are more comprehensive in urban areas than rural.

**Lewis Pengam School** in Caerphilly local authority has worked closely with agencies such as Umbrella Cymru to provide effective support for LGBT pupils. Some key features of its support strategy include:

- A programme of whole staff training implemented in partnership with Umbrella Cymru to ensure that all staff understand key concepts concerning gender identity and sexual orientation.
- The compilation of a whole-school charter created by pupils, staff and governors that outlines the school's stance on LGBT issues, school policy and practices as well as providing definitions of key terms.
- The highlighting of LGBT issues through the strategic use of creative media. For example, the school has worked with the Iris Outreach team to create a short film that highlights LGBT themes.
- The creation of a LGBT group, the 'Pride of Pengam' that meets weekly and provides a safe and nurturing space where pupils can seek information and support. The group consists of pupils who identify as LGBT as well as those sympathetic to supporting LGBT equality. Attendees also plan events including competitions, coffee mornings, a celebration of LGBT history month and the annual Pride event.
- The annual Pride event, which involves the whole school taking part in a celebration of LGBT identity. Key partners from the community such as youth services and police attend and provide pupils with guidance and highlight the support available in the local community. Events include an assembly with guest speakers and performers, as well as such activities as sports events, films, crafts, music and dance.

- 39 In effective schools and colleges, staff understand that pupils being LGBT does not imply a safeguarding risk, but do appreciate the need to ensure that learners understand how to stay safe when seeking guidance and support online. Staff form trusting relationships with young people to ensure that they are comfortable to approach staff members in confidence. They support learners effectively to deal with specific issues of online homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. In the best cases, schools and colleges work to prevent online homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying as part of their wider approach to addressing issues around bullying through the curriculum.
- 40 Effective schools communicate clearly to parents and the wider community their approach to inclusion and intolerance of discrimination, such as by talking to local faith leaders about the school's policy towards promoting inclusion. A few schools celebrate diversity actively through regular annual events that help to promote an inclusive message through the school and its local community. Many colleges and a

very few secondary schools promote and attend Pride events that celebrate diversity and highlight the importance of inclusion.

- 41 Many schools are supported well in their development of groups for LGBT pupils by youth services delivered by the local authority, voluntary sector organisations, or in partnership. This support takes the form of youth workers organising and managing groups for pupils during the school day, and immediately after school finishes, as well as the provision of group work in community settings during young people's leisure time. Many of these groups also welcome 'allies', young people who want to join in order to better support their friends who are LGBT.
- 42 Youth workers also provide advice and support to pupils who need this. They contribute to PSE lessons for pupils, and provide in-house training and development sessions for teachers. In one school, pupils attending an LGBT support group feel more confident when discussing their issues with youth workers than their teachers, as they prefer the youth workers' way of working and see them as more approachable and understanding of their needs.
- 43 A few local authority youth services have identified a clear link between LGBT status and homelessness in older young people. Their work suggests that this is the result of pressures on LGBT learners' mental health and tensions within their families as they begin to express their gender and sexual identity.

**Ynys Môn Youth Service** have established LGBT groups in three of their five secondary schools and are in the process of establishing groups in the other two schools. The local authority is also working with Digartref Ynys Môn to develop provision for 16 to 24-year-olds, and also to develop parent support groups.

Provision has been developed following consultation with young people by the local authority's education and youth department, regarding the type of support and provision they would like to see in place. Young people identified support for LGBT pupils as a key need. Further local research has shown that unresolved LGBT issues is one major factor contributing to youth homelessness on the island. For example, young people's relationship with other family members breaks down as a result of them 'coming out', which leads to them being homeless.

In one school, the local authority youth service runs an LGBT group on Thursday lunchtimes within the school. There are currently between 5 and 15 pupils who attend the group, made up from young people who are LGBT and also their allies and friends. The group came about due to Year 12 pupils developing this as a project for their Welsh Baccalaureate course. As a result of the positive stance taken by the school, it has begun to attract more pupils who identify as LGBT, as they feel safe and valued.

- 44 In schools and colleges that are sensitive to the needs of transgender learners, staff liaise well with parents and carers to address the challenges they face and modify provision where needed. In most schools, staff reassure parents of transgender pupils that they will act to tackle discrimination against their children and that they will not tolerate homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. However, only a small proportion of schools are truly effective in addressing this issue and, in too many cases, bullying of transgender pupils impacts negatively on their school experience.

In one primary school, during Year 5, a pupil identified as a different gender from their sex assigned at their birth. The pupil trusted staff in the school and felt able to discuss their change of gender identity with them. In particular, the provision of a drop-in wellbeing facility allowed the pupil to discuss their feelings with a specific member of staff who acted as a first point of contact within the school during their transition. The school worked sensitively with the pupil and their parents to support them. The school also worked sensitively with the rest of the pupil's class to ensure that they responded appropriately to the pupil's change of gender identity. The school liaised with relevant external agencies to advise and guide them in their handling of the case.

In a majority of secondary schools and colleges, leaders consider how sex or gender-specific features and facilities, such as toilets, changing rooms and school uniform requirements, impact on the lives of transgender learners. In the best cases, leaders do not make assumptions about their needs, but work with them sensitively to adapt provision and ensure that they can access the most appropriate facilities given their needs and the nature of the school or college building. Effective leaders recognise that there are no standard or simple solutions to these challenges, and there is a need for dialogue with all involved. In this work, effective schools have regard to their legal duties relating to separate and same sex spaces as outlined in the background section of this report.

- 45 Often, schools and colleges are limited as to the physical changes they can make to facilities because of the limitations of the building and available budgets. In the best cases, where they are making changes to their facilities or planning a new build, they consult with all learners including any LGBT groups to consider their opinions. However, too frequently when considering the construction of new buildings, schools and colleges do not consider provision for transgender learners well enough.
- 46 Where the situation arises, schools and colleges work well with external agencies to support learners who wish to transition by providing them with time off and allowing them to catch up with any work they have missed. The most effective schools and colleges respond flexibly to the needs of the learners and understand that the transition journey is unique to each individual young person. In these cases, they work well with pupils, learners and their parents to plan the transition process. They communicate this to other members of the school or college community sensitively. This eases the transition journey and reduces instances of transphobic bullying.



- 47 Most schools and colleges with transgender pupils work closely with them to ensure where appropriate that staff and learners are advised to respect the name and pronouns with which they have chosen

to identify. In the best cases, schools and colleges place a high priority on ensuring that they use their preferred names on management information systems, awards and certificates. However, in many cases, providers face challenges arising from the inflexibility of electronic systems to record or modify pupils' gender. Frequently, schools and colleges are reluctant to change pupils' or learners' gender through fear of legal implications.

- 48 Many schools and colleges with transgender learners recognise that they may want to alter how they dress to reflect their gender identity and a few schools now ensure that all approved uniform items are available to all young people, whichever sex or gender they associate with most closely. Recent Welsh Government statutory guidance provides clear instructions for governing bodies on the contents of their school uniform policy.

In its 'Statutory guidance for school governing bodies on school uniform and appearance policies', the **Welsh Government** (2019d) outlines its expectations on the content of school uniform policies:

'A governing body will state the composition of its school uniform and ensure an inclusive school uniform policy that does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender identity. A gender neutral school uniform policy may list items of clothing which are permitted to be worn in school, without any requirements for items of clothing to only be worn by students of a certain gender' (Welsh Government, 2019d, p.8).

Schools need to consider whether flexibility is needed in relation to uniform. 'Failure to allow a pupil to wear uniform that reflects their gender identity may constitute discrimination on the basis of gender reassignment under the Equality Act (2010)' (Welsh Government, 2019d, p.8).

- 49 Many schools and colleges allow transgender learners to participate in team sports with the gender with which they identify, unless there are specific safety concerns that prevent this from occurring<sup>1</sup>. On residential trips, schools and colleges work sensitively with all parties to consider sleeping arrangements. In the case of overseas trips, staff consider carefully the possible implications of official documentation, such as passports, not matching the pupil or learner's self-identified gender and the legal protection available in the destination country to learners who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
- 50 In the best cases, primary and secondary schools work together closely to ensure that pupils make a successful transition from primary to secondary school. Here, effective communication between primary and secondary schools and continued consultation with pupils and parents is essential to avoid any negative impact on pupil wellbeing. However, in too many cases, the move to secondary education for transgender pupils impacts negatively on their wellbeing as a result of inadequate

<sup>1</sup> This was our finding in 2020 and may not represent current practice. It is recommended that schools consider any guidance from a sport's national governing body when deciding how to conduct sports in schools and colleges safely.

support for the process.

## 4 The impact of leadership

- 51 School and college leaders play a key role in establishing a culture of inclusion to ensure that LGBT learners thrive and achieve at the level of which they are capable. Where this is most effective, a strong moral purpose drives leaders and staff to ensure inclusion and celebrate diversity in their institution. In schools, governors assist leaders to establish and maintain an inclusive ethos and support them in addressing challenges when they arise.
- 52 In many of the schools and colleges we visited, leaders create environments that celebrate individuality and this impacts positively on the wellbeing of all learners. Through effective, transparent communication they ensure that parents and the wider community recognise the importance that the provider places on inclusion. For example, schools hold special events to explain their approach to delivering relationships and sexuality education, including how they explore issues around sexual orientation and gender identity. Schools that cater well for pupils from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds recognise the need to engage local faith leaders and arrange visits to local mosques and churches to outline and explain their approach.
- 53 In the primary schools we visited, leaders and governors establish a culture where staff understand the importance of portraying and discussing different types of families and relationships in a natural and development-appropriate way. In these schools, leaders ensure that from a young age pupils do not develop rigid stereotypes of relationships, gender identity and sexual orientation. Across all sectors, leaders that prioritise the importance of equality challenge staff to use language with learners that does not reinforce stereotypes and to be mindful of this when planning activities and developing the learning environment.
- 54 In schools and colleges that are successful in creating a positive culture around LGBT issues, leaders act as inclusive employers ensuring equal treatment and opportunity for LGBT staff. They apply the same guidance around discussing personal relationships to LGBT staff as to others. In these cases, LGBT staff can act as positive role models for learners, but leaders also ensure that LGBT staff do not feel pressured to speak about their personal lives any more than any other employee. Successful leaders recognise that creating a positive ethos around LGBT issues is as important for staff as learners.

**Eveswell Primary School** has seen the proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds increase in recent years. The headteacher and other leaders have established an ethos for the school that celebrates diversity and challenges stereotypes. They share a clear vision for the school based around everyone having a sense of belonging, whatever their individual backgrounds and context. They ensure that acceptance of a person's sexual orientation, sex or gender reassignment is taught in the same way as other protected characteristics, such as race, disability and religious belief.

Around ten years ago, the school identified a need to modify its provision to tackle stereotyping and promote equality. Leaders arranged for Stonewall Cymru to deliver training for all staff on celebrating diversity and challenging gender stereotypes. This training provided the school with the impetus to make changes to its curriculum and systems that have led to the development of a highly inclusive learning community. Actions include:

- Auditing resources to remove those that portray stereotypes of gender, race and religion
- Ensuring that texts portraying different types of loving relationships and families are available to pupils and included as part of the curriculum at a development-appropriate level
- Developing a curriculum that includes many opportunities to teach the importance of challenging stereotypes and the promotion of positive role models for people with protected characteristics
- Providing effective opportunities for pupils to raise issues and questions around personal issues, such as through the use of class worry boxes and regular circle time sessions
- Reviewing relevant school policies to ensure that they contain reference to promoting equality and challenging stereotypes
- Reviewing the school's leadership structure to create a specific wellbeing lead and wellbeing group
- Ensuring that the importance of promoting all forms of equality is highlighted during induction processes for new staff
- Ensuring clarity with parents around the school's approach to promoting equality through newsletters, social media and by sending home termly overviews of the topics being covered in class
- Positively engaging with the local community and religious leaders, such as through visits to the local mosque and discussions with the community's imam
- Working with pupils to create an effective anti-bullying policy and procedures that have specific reference to protected characteristics, including tackling homophobic bullying
- Regular reviews of the impact of the school's work in tackling stereotyping and promoting equality through their self-evaluation processes

- 55 In effective colleges, leaders work with learners to review and improve provision, such as by carrying out an audit and establishing a learner equality group that takes responsibility for the strategic equality plan. In a few cases, colleges fund sabbatical posts for learners to act as officers with specific responsibility for LGBT issues.

**Cardiff and the Vale College** has acted to improve learner involvement across the college. It focused on working with learners at all levels and from all protected characteristics to gather their views on aspects of the learner experience. The college has established a full-time learners' voice and inclusivity co-ordinator, plus a number of funded Sabbatical Officer Posts for learners, which include Liberation Officers to support and champion the cause of LGBT and black, Asian and minority ethnic learners (BAME).

- 56 Many secondary schools have established LGBT pupil voice groups. In a few schools, these groups are well established and play a key role in school improvement, such as developing policy to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying or assisting staff in revising the school's delivery of the PSE curriculum. A very few primary schools have pupil equality groups that work with staff to consider issues such as how well the school's curriculum tackles gender stereotyping.

After analysing the outcomes of the School Health Research Network report and the findings from the 'whole school approach' to mental health survey, leaders at **Bassaleg High School** concluded that they needed to do more to improve the provision of relationships and sexuality education and to support their LGBT pupils. They worked with pupils to create a 'well-being driven tutor programme' that covers topics that were not already embedded within the curriculum, such as mental health, relationships and sexuality education and building resilience. The school used pupil voice further to help map the relationships and sexuality education programme across curriculum areas. The school then worked with feeder primary schools to ensure that pupils arrive in Year 7 with the same previous learning experiences.

In addition, following the outcomes of the self-evaluation activity, staff worked with pupils to establish a LGBT support group. This group has been instrumental in making positive changes within the school setting to support transgender pupils, such as the introduction of a gender-neutral uniform policy and an option to choose to use a small number of gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities. The group has linked with other school settings and the local authority to share good practice. The school's pastoral support officers now provide specific support to LGBT pupils and the school has developed links with a wide range of external agencies, such as Stonewall, Umbrella Cymru and Newport Mind, to provide specific assistance to LGBT pupils when needed. Well-planned professional learning has supported staff to develop



- 57 Effective leaders build the consideration of learners' wellbeing and mental health into their self-evaluation arrangements. In a very few cases, they use self-evaluation and improvement arrangements well to consider their provision for LGBT learners and develop it further. In the most inclusive schools, leaders and governors ensure that the school's Strategic Equality Plan contains actions aimed at improving how well they address LGBT issues, such as through reviewing the school's staff induction policy to ensure new staff understand the school's approach to addressing and recording instances of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.
- 58 In many schools and colleges, leaders introduce electronic systems to note instances of bullying. In the best cases they use this information to record, report and help address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. In the most effective schools and colleges, leaders create an environment where staff and learners understand the damage that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language causes. In these providers, staff demonstrate a zero tolerance approach and robustly address the negative impact of this use of language when it arises. A few schools use restorative justice practices well to address issues of discrimination. This practice helps to ensure that perpetrators consider the impact of their actions and is more likely to prevent them from repeating the offence. However, in too many schools, leaders do not record instances of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying to identify trends or act to address them.

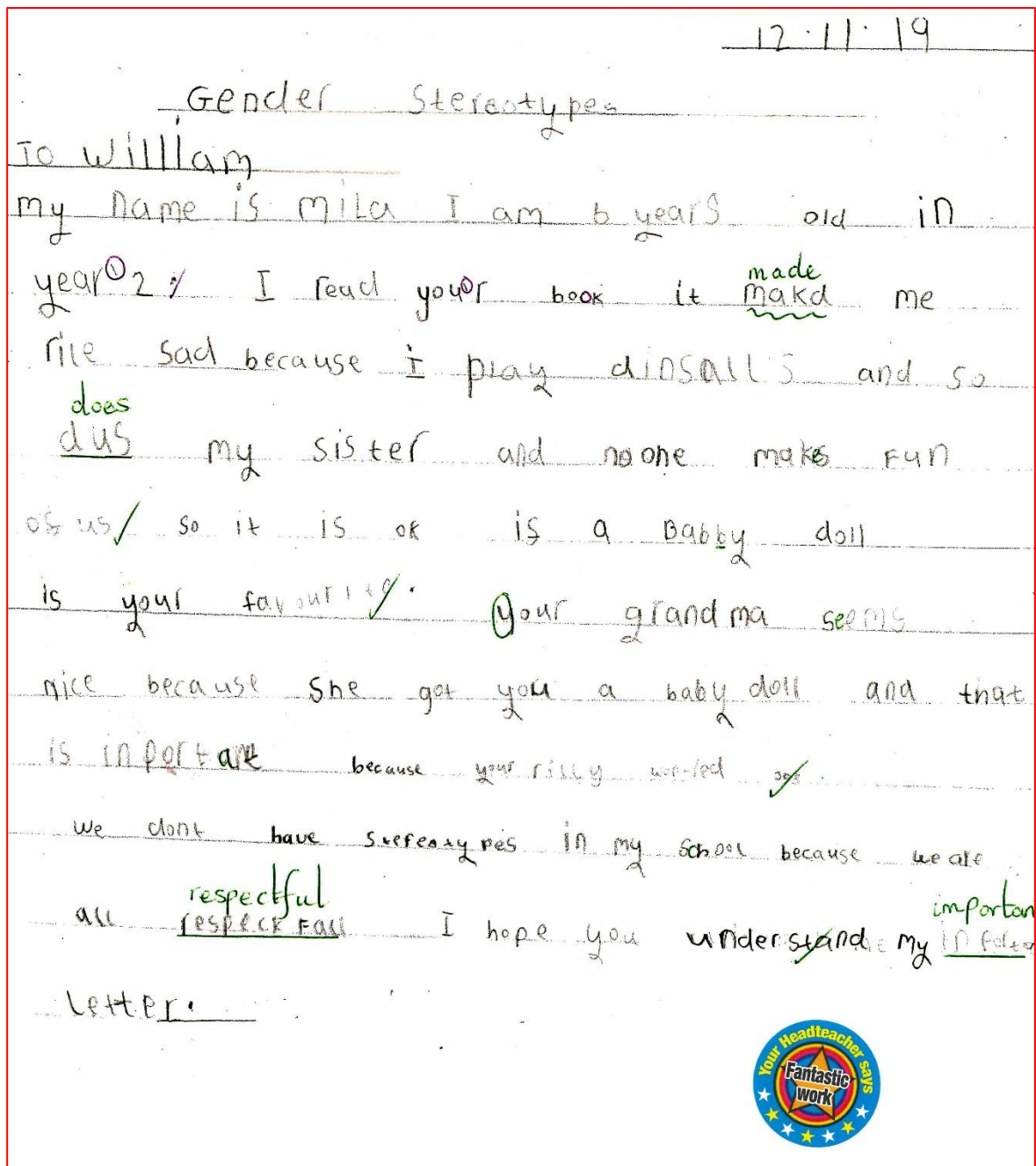
In its recent guidance, 'Rights, respect, equality: statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools, the **Welsh Government** (2019b, p.69) outlines its expectations of how schools should record and monitor bullying:

'The Welsh Government expects schools to record all incidents of bullying, outlining the specific types of bullying, including bullying around the protected characteristics. The Welsh Government expects schools to monitor processes regularly. This will enable schools to modify their bullying policies to respond to specific trends and emerging issues in a swift and effective manner.'

- 59 However, in many cases, leaders have been less successful in ensuring a positive environment for LGBT learners than for those with other protected characteristics. Often, this is as a result of a combination of factors, including not recognising the importance of LGBT inclusion as a priority, fear of negative feedback from parents and the wider community, and a lack of confidence among leaders and staff in addressing LGBT issues. The legacy of legislation such as section 28 of the Local Government Act 1998 (since repealed – see page 2) is also a contributory factor.
- 60 Many staff who are LGBT remain more reticent to refer to their personal relationships than their heterosexual colleagues because of concerns of a negative reaction from others, such as parents and other members of staff.
- 61 In a majority of schools, leaders do not place enough priority on tackling stereotypes and do not address inappropriate typecasting as it arises effectively enough. They do not recognise the use of inappropriate language targeted towards non-LGBT learners as being a form of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, for

example the use of the word 'gay'. For learners who are LGBT or those that are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, learning in an environment where the use of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language is commonplace and not challenged by staff, is intimidating and can further exacerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation.

- 62 Even in those secondary schools that attempt to improve the educational experience of LGBT pupils and where they have established LGBT pupil voice groups, leaders tend to have an overly positive view of the provision for LGBT pupils and the quality of their school experience. The impact of these groups in influencing the nature and quality of provision is variable.



## 5 Professional learning

- 63 At best, leaders ensure high-quality professional learning for all staff that provides them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to support LGBT learners. In these cases, there is the greatest impact on the quality of support for LGBT young people, particularly in terms of developing a positive whole-provider ethos towards LGBT inclusion. Often, external organisations with specific expertise in the area of supporting LGBT learners deliver this training.
- 64 In a few cases, professional learning takes place across a group of institutions and across sectors. This is effective in supporting continuity of provision and helps to ensure LGBT pupils make the move from primary to secondary school successfully. Occasionally, local authorities take a leading role in highlighting the need for schools to develop their ability to support LGBT pupils. They work successfully with primary and secondary schools to improve staff confidence by facilitating training from external partners.

**Conwy County Borough Council** led secondary schools within the authority in a process of using data from the School Health Research Network (SHRN) survey to identify areas of pupil wellbeing that needed development. This work identified a common need for additional support around LGBT issues. In response, the authority invited Stonewall Cymru and Viva LGBT to work in partnership to deliver a LGBT awareness workshop for Conwy secondary schools. As a result of the workshops, school and education personnel requested further training.

In October 2018, the local authority accessed funding from GwE, the regional school improvement service, to deliver Stonewall ‘train the trainer’ sessions to 12 educational personnel. This included one representative from each of Conwy’s secondary schools as well as local authority staff. The impact of the training was positive. Schools welcomed the opportunity to be better informed and equipped to promote inclusivity. The trained staff from schools and the authority worked collaboratively with other partners, such as Viva LGBT and primary teachers, to develop a gender identity policy that is still evolving. The authority has delivered consultation workshops for school personnel, pupils, governors and parents to discuss the policy and to agree its roll out in schools.

As a result of the initiative from the local authority, **Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy** has worked with pupils, staff, parents, governors and external partners, such as TRAC and Viva LGBT, to develop a whole school approach to provision for LGBT pupils. This includes developing an inclusive environment by mapping relationships and sexuality education across its curriculum and introducing inclusive, non-stereotyping themes into the classroom. It delivers support for specific LGBT pupils and their families by working in partnership with the TRAC wellbeing co-ordinator and Viva LGBT lead youth workers. The school is now working in partnership with cluster primary schools to ensure a continuum of relationships and sexuality education learning from key stage 2 to key stage 3.

- 65 In effective schools and colleges, leaders ensure the importance of promoting equality and celebrating diversity forms part of induction procedures for new staff and governors. They highlight its importance in communications, such as via social media.
- 66 In a few cases, leaders work with colleagues in other schools to ensure effective provision across establishments.

A cluster of primary schools use the experience and expertise of a member of staff from one of its schools to lead on LGBT issues and provide support for pupils and families. The staff member's first-hand experience of supporting the process of 'coming out' of a relative led to her supporting the parents of a child within the school who was questioning their sexual orientation. Over time this role has formalised, led to training for all staff from Stonewall and the development of her role in co-ordinating support round LGBT issues across the cluster. She provides empathetic support to LGBT pupils and their families that extends beyond the classroom and includes support mechanisms from expert agencies. As part of her role, she helps schools to create a culture of openness in which pupils are comfortable exploring sensitive issues. This work involves challenging family and gender stereotypes through the curriculum. It also includes providing a safe environment, underpinned by policies that tackle bullying, prevent the use of hateful language and help to change mindsets through restorative education.

- 67 Overall, across Wales, very few primary school staff and a minority of secondary and further education college staff have received training on how to promote LGBT inclusion, support LGBT learners and tackle homophobic bullying. Nearly all staff wish to support learners to feel safe and happy in school or college and to fulfil their potential. However, too many are unsure about the best way to ensure this for LGBT young people and lack confidence in talking to them about LGBT issues.
- 68 A minority of secondary school staff and a few primary school staff feel confident in supporting pupils who come out to them. Overall, too few staff in primary and secondary schools and colleges of further education have received training in how to support LGBT learners. In particular, professional learning for staff around supporting transgender learners is underdeveloped.
- 69 There are a few instances of school-to-school collaboration to develop the skills of staff in supporting LGBT pupils. However, often training takes the form of individual courses that have limited impact on overall provision within providers. Too often the impact of external training is short-lived and does not have a long-term effect on the quality of provision. This is particularly the case where there is a lack of commitment to inclusion by senior leaders.

## Appendix 1: Self-evaluation questions to support LGBT inclusion

When considering their provision for supporting LGBT learners, schools and colleges should consider the following questions:

- To what extent do learners experience positive LGBT role models through the curriculum, and in the wider learning environment?
- How well does the curriculum incorporate development-appropriate discussion of LGBT issues?
- To what extent do staff have the skills, knowledge and confidence to support learners around LGBT matters?
- How well does the school or college liaise with parents, carers and other relevant parties to support the needs of LGBT learners?
- How effective are systems to ensure that learners know how to go about talking to a member of staff about personal issues, including those related to 'coming out'?
- Have leaders engaged effectively with parents and the wider community to explain their rationale and approach to relationships and sexuality education?
- How effectively and robustly do leaders address issues of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying?
- Have leaders and governors reviewed their policies and procedures to ensure that they recognise, record and address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying as it arises?
- How well do leaders and governors include the wellbeing of LGBT learners as part of their self-evaluation processes?
- To what extent do they consider the views of learners, including LGBT young people, around the representation of LGBT people in the curriculum and learning environment?
- What is the quality of professional learning for staff to help them support LGBT learners?
- How effectively does professional learning help to create an ethos of inclusion where diversity is celebrated and prejudice challenged?

## Appendix 2: Evidence base

The findings and recommendations in this report draw on:

- a range of inspection evidence
- visits to a range of primary and secondary schools and colleges of further education
- the outcomes of questionnaires for learners in the secondary schools and colleges visited
- discussions with local authority officers and youth workers
- a literature review

The schools and colleges that we identified as being suitable for a visit are those where inspection activity, or the work of educational consortia, suggest effective practice in supporting LGBT pupils and creating a climate of inclusion exists.

The activities inspectors used to gather information when visiting a school or college varied according to its context and the nature of its work, but included:

- interviews with senior leaders
- interviews with teachers and support staff
- interviews with learner voice groups, such as LGBT groups, equality groups and school councils
- observing sessions and activities
- looking at examples of learners' work
- scrutiny of policies and schemes of work

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- Lansdowne Primary School, Cardiff
- Lewis Pengam High School, Caerphilly
- The College, Merthyr Tydfil
- Overmonnow Primary School, Monmouthshire
- Pembroke Primary School, Monmouthshire
- Pen y Dre High School, Merthyr Tydfil
- Ysgol Bro Cinmeirch, Denbighshire
- Ysgol Coedcae High School, Carmarthenshire
- Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy, Conwy
- Ysgol Glan Morfa, Cardiff



- Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd, Newport
- Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, Cardiff
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr, Cardiff

## Glossary

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Gender identity</b>                               | A person's perception of having a particular gender, which may or may not correspond with their birth sex   |
| <b>Continuous and enhanced provision</b>             | Continuous provision is the use of resources that are continuously available in the indoor or outdoor classroom for pupils to use independently. Enhanced provision is the additions to the continuous provision to provoke children to think more deeply, practise new skills, or learn new ways of working.                   |
| <b>Gender stereotyping</b>                           | A generalised preconception about attributes, characteristics or roles that ought to be possessed or performed by women and men   |
| <b>homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying</b> | Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (homophobic, biphobic and transphobic) bullying is bullying directed at someone who is or is perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.  |
| <b>Pride</b>   | Pride is a celebration of the LGBT community. There are hundreds of Pride events taking place every year, in towns and cities across the UK and all over the world. Each Pride event is different but many have a colourful parade through the town or city.  |
| <b>Protected characteristics</b>                     | The Equality Act 2010 sets out the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.  |
| <b>Restorative practices</b>                         | A restorative approach is a way of resolving conflict that focuses on repairing the harm that has been done. The approach requires all parties involved in the conflict to share with each other what their involvement was, how the conflict has affected them, and agree what needs to be done to for things to be put right. |
| <b>Sexual orientation</b>                            | A person's sexual identity in relation to the sex to which they are attracted; the fact of being heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual  |
| <b>SHRN</b>  | The School Health Research Network is a partnership between Cardiff University, Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and other agencies. It aims to work with schools to provide health and wellbeing data and research to support policy and practice at local and national levels.   |

## Numbers – quantities and proportions

|               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| nearly all =  | with very few exceptions |
| most =        | 90% or more              |
| many =        | 70% or more              |
| a majority =  | over 60%                 |
| half =        | 50%                      |
| around half = | close to 50%             |
| a minority =  | below 40%                |
| few =         | below 20%                |
| very few =    | less than 10%            |

## Summary of organisations supporting LGBT learners mentioned in the report

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Digartref Ynys Môn</b> | Provides short and long-term solutions for those experiencing or at risk of becoming homeless  |
| <b>Iris Outreach</b>      | A division of the Iris Prize Festival. Its aim is to provide support and education to schools, organisations and community groups all over Wales by building partnerships to provide participants with the skills and knowledge of film industry experts as well as promoting social inclusion and community cohesion. |
| <b>Newport Mind</b>       | An organisation based in Newport that provides a range of services to advise and support those experiencing mental health problems   |
| <b>Stonewall Cymru</b>    | A campaigning organisation that aims to achieve legal equality and social justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Wales   |
| <b>TRAC</b>               | A project in North Wales led by Denbighshire County Council for 11 to 24-year-olds at risk of disengaging with education   |
| <b>Umbrella Cymru</b>     | Their aim is to support LGBT people and advance gender and sexual diversity, equality and inclusion across Wales.  |
| <b>Viva LGBT</b>          | Viva provides youth groups and support for young people aged 14 to 25 identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or those who aren't sure yet.   |

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