

Step 5: Recognising and Responding to Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Incidents



It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.

Audre Lorde, poet, author and civil rights activist



In order to ensure that all incidents are picked up by the school and dealt with consistently, the school must have a clear procedure for dealing with prejudice-related incidents, which is communicated to all staff and pupils.

Pupil surveys across the Free to Be schools revealed that a large number of young people do not report HBT incidents to teachers. Some of the reasons given included “because it happens all the time, so you just get used to it” and “because they might not think it’s important.”

Pupils should be made aware of the prejudice-related incident procedure through circle time and class assemblies and encouraged to report all incidents, being reassured that they will be taken seriously.

Worry boxes can be made available in classrooms for pupils who do not want to speak directly to a member of staff.

Case Study:

Dulwich Hamlet Junior School, Southwark has created school reporting boxes which are checked regularly.

This has helped pupils to report any concerns about HBT bullying or their own wellbeing in a safe and non-threatening way.





Note: These procedures may form part of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy; however it is important that all incidents are picked up, including those which are a one-off, or do not have a direct target.

1. Recognising Incidents

This should start with a clear definition. The working definition of a prejudice-related incident, is:

'A prejudice-related incident is any incident which is perceived to be prejudice-related by the victim or any other person'

This definition has been derived from the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry definition of a racist incident and has been adopted by the police when considering hate incidents.

Using this definition ensures that every incident is picked up, even where the perpetrator did not intend to cause hurt. Importantly, it ensures that people are listened to. Pupils and staff are more likely to speak up about prejudice if they know that they will be taken seriously.

"Working with this definition has made a big difference in the school, and it brings the way we deal with incidents in line with other safeguarding procedures. We previously thought that we didn't really have any homophobic incidents, but when we reflected using this definition, we realised that there were incidents occurring that we were not dealing with in the right way."

Primary School, Dagenham

2. Effective Challenge

Where a member of staff has witnessed an incident, the language or behaviour should be challenged at the time. The aim should be to secure the best possible outcome for everyone involved. Therefore, interventions should be educational and restorative and seek to create attitudinal and behavioural change, with the goal of preventing future incidents from occurring.

How a challenge is made will depend on the circumstances of the incident, the severity of the incident, who it involves, where it takes place and the intention behind the comment. Scripts can be useful in giving staff the confidence to challenge. Some sample scripts are below:

Institutional Response

- The school policy says that we are all responsible for making this a safe place for everyone. That kind of language is homophobic and makes people feel unsafe. Therefore, it is unacceptable.
- In our school we treat everyone with respect and when you use 'gay' like that, it is disrespectful of gay and lesbian people.
- It's important that at this school people feel able to be themselves and do things that they enjoy, so we don't say that they shouldn't do something because they are a boy/girl.

Reasoning and Enquiry Questions

- What do you think that word means?
- What makes you think that?
- How would you feel if someone spoke about you in that way?
- Do you realise that what you said is transphobic?
- Can you explain what you mean by calling that 'gay'?
- That word is an insulting term for someone who is transgender. Do you know what it means to be transgender?
- Do you know what a gender stereotype is? Can you think of why some people might feel uncomfortable and disrespected when they hear them at school?

Personal Response

- I'm not happy with what you said.
- Transphobic language offends me. I don't want to hear it again.
- What you've said really upsets me. I hoped you would recognise that it is important to treat everyone with respect and that it is therefore wrong to use such homophobic language.

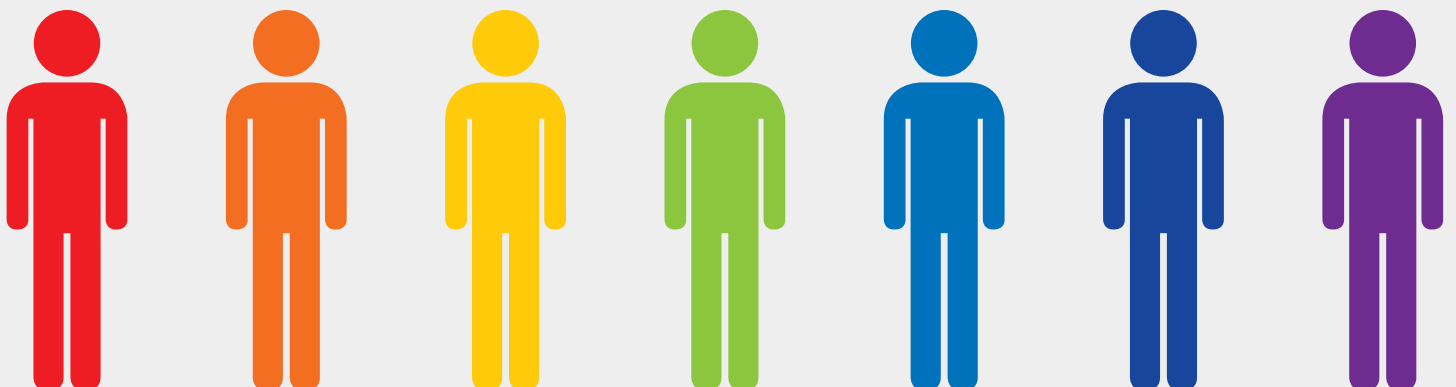
Case Study: Whole School Scripts - Starks Field Primary School, Enfield

The use of the word 'gay' as a derogatory term to describe things that are bad or rubbish is common in many schools. A whole school script can be used to ensure that this language is always challenged appropriately

Starks Field Primary adopted the following script:

"At our school, we don't use the word gay in an unkind way towards anyone. We don't use the word gay to mean something is rubbish or uncool. Being gay means when a man is attracted to and loves another man or when a woman is attracted to and loves another woman. It is okay to be gay. We are all different and unique and we accept and are respectful to everyone at Starks Field Primary School. It's great that we are all different! Wouldn't our community be boring if we were all the same? Remember to be kind to everybody and help make them feel safe."

All staff received training on how they should recognise and respond to incidents and use the script. The head teacher introduced the script in a whole school assembly and allowed the young people to ask questions about it. Copies of the script were then made into posters and displayed around the school.



3. Recording Incidents

The incident should be logged by the member of staff who first becomes aware of it on a prejudice-related incident form, or directly onto an online monitoring system such as SIMS or CPOMS.

A sample recording form is below:

Details of prejudice-related incident		
Name & role of person reporting the incident:		
Date/location of incident:	Date:	Location:
Victim's name/class/year:		
Type of incident: (Tick applicable category/categories)	Homophobia: Prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about lesbian, or gay people.	Sexism: Prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or view about someone based on their sex.
	Transphobia: Prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about transgender people including refusal to accept their gender.	Disability or health condition: A physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.
	Racism: Prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about someone based on their skin colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins.	Islamophobia: Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.
	Biphobia: Prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or view about bisexual people.	Other (specify):

Names of people who have been informed:		
Person who committed the offence: (Include their name/class/year (if pupil))	Pupil:	Teaching staff:
	Visitor:	Parent:
	Other staff:	Governor:
	Other (specify):	
Description of the incident:		
Was this a physical or a verbal incident?		
Were physical injuries sustained? If yes, specify the extent and to whom:		
Names of other people involved, including bystanders:		
Has the offender been involved in previous prejudice -related incidents? If yes, please provide details:		

<p>Level of severity of the incident. Please circle on scale.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No offence was intended or taken. 2. Hurt or distress was caused, but the offending behaviour is unlikely to be repeated. 3. Hurt or distress was caused and the pupil(s) responsible had previously been warned that their behaviour was unacceptable. 4. Substantial hurt or distress was caused, and/or the behaviour was based on substantial hostility and prejudice, and/or the behaviour may be repeated.
<p>What action will be/has been taken?</p>	
<p>What measures are in place to prevent a similar incident from occurring again?</p>	



Note: The recording system should have separate categories for all the protected characteristics to allow data to be analysed, patterns and learning needs to be identified, and to show that all types of prejudice are taken seriously by the school.

Using a scale to show the severity of the incident helps to create a clearer picture of what is happening in the school and is reassuring to staff who may otherwise be reluctant to record an incident that was not perceived to be intentional.

4: Investigation Undertaken

Investigations should be undertaken by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Parents/carers should be informed.

Both perpetrator and target need to be provided with a fair hearing and given the opportunity separately to fully explain the incident, ensuring privacy for discussion and using a calm and non-confrontational approach.

Witnesses should give statements to inform the investigation.

The decision should be explained: why the incident was prejudice-related if the investigation proves it to be, or the reasons why it was not prejudice-related if that is the outcome.

5. Response Decided

All parties need to understand what is being done to address the incident and the reasons behind this.

Follow up meetings should be held with the perpetrator and target after an agreed time period, to inform them of further actions taken and provide opportunities for additional support if required.

Where appropriate, both parties should be brought together to give them a chance to be involved in resolving the situation and the perpetrator should be provided with the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions and to take action to try to repair the harm that they have caused.

Curriculum opportunities should be provided for (all) pupils to develop their understanding of prejudice and discrimination.

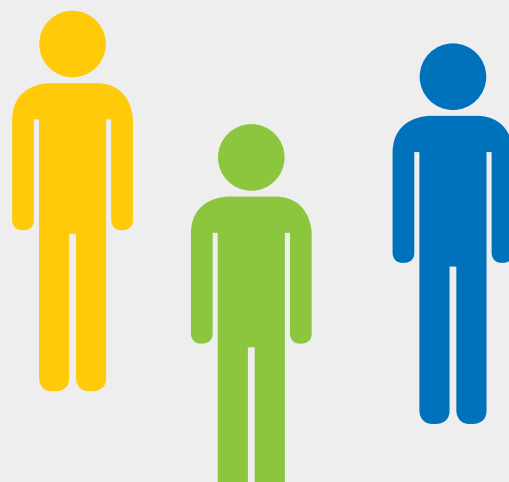
Targets and parents have a right to refer cases to the police and all parties have a right to appeal to the Governing Body.



Note: Termly meetings should be held by the school's Equalities Group/SLT to discuss incidents, look at patterns and decide further interventions.

Incidents Perpetrated by Staff Members

All incidents should be reported to a member of the leadership team immediately. The incident should be logged and investigated by the Head Teacher or Assistant Head. Incidents of discrimination, harassment and victimisation should be treated in line with the school's Equality and Diversity Policy and Disciplinary Procedure.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Checklist

Some of the changes outlined in this pack are out of individual teacher's control and it can feel as though there is little that individuals can do. However, there are small changes that all educators can make in order to create more inclusive settings. Teachers' involved in the Free to Be project found this reflective checklist useful in helping them to provide the safe and inclusive environment that all pupils deserve.

Policies and Procedures - seek out and become familiar with school policies and procedures which relate to:

Equality

Anti-bullying

Recognising and responding to prejudice-related incidents

Community cohesion

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

Safeguarding

PSHE

Relationships (and Sex) Education

Fundamental British Values

Personal Conduct

Ensure that you know the correct words to use to be able to discuss issues of LGBT+ equality and identity.

Avoid jokes which target aspects of people's identity.

Use LGBT+ inclusive and gender-neutral language.

Be aware of the harmful impact of stereotypes and assumptions.

Reflect on your perceptions of different groups.

Have high expectations of all pupils.

Be aware that no-one comes to the classroom from a culturally neutral background, value difference.

Supporting pupils

Find out how pupils prefer to be addressed and how to pronounce their names.

Find out individual pupils' learning and personal needs.

Be aware and respectful of different family make-ups amongst pupils and that pupils or pupils' family members may experience their gender in different ways.

Provide opportunities for pupils from different backgrounds to interact and learn together.

Work with pupils to create ground rules for the classroom.

Effectively challenge prejudicial attitudes and behaviours.

Ensure that all pupils and parents/carers know that if they have a worry or concern they can speak with you.

Provide a box in the classroom where pupils can write down concerns if they are too nervous to speak to someone about it.

Ensure that pupils know about the school's approach to LGBT+ equality and what they should do if they see or witness homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying.

Resources

Provide opportunities for learners to encounter a wide variety of role models, including those who do not conform to stereotypes and those who the young people do not regularly encounter in the local community.

Celebrate the contributions of people of a variety of LGBT+ identities.

Monitor resources for stereotypes and assumptions.

Explore alternative ways to deliver material to make it inclusive and accessible to learners.

Ensure that displays and resources reflect people from a wide range of different groups, families, genders and backgrounds.

