

Homophobic Bullying

Lesson Plan



Homophobic bullying is an issue that some schools are not comfortable in discussing, which can reinforce homophobic bullying behaviour in the school environment. This lesson plan gives teachers the opportunity to discuss homophobic bullying in an open environment with a view to addressing stereotypes and often deeply held prejudice by some young people. It can also be hugely supportive for any young gay students - although please be aware that some young people struggling to come to terms with their sexuality may need additional support.

For those young people struggling with their sexuality, you are most welcome to direct them to the CyberMentors website, which has dedicated support for young LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual) students and a counsellor employed specifically to advise on this issue.



Learning Outcomes

- Raise awareness of homophobic bullying
- An understanding of homophobic bullying and cyberbullying
- Definition of homophobia and homophobic bullying and the impact it has on young people
- Recognition of the influences and pressures on young people
- Key issues affecting LGBT young people
- Ability to write a school anti-homophobic bullying charter/policy

Pre-lesson preparation:

Before the lesson you should ask that all pupils are comfortable in taking part in the lesson. As we know, there are certain faiths and cultures that forbid homosexuality, and we need therefore to respect their views.

What you will need:

Flipchart or whiteboard, pens, at least one mobile phone with picture and Bluetooth functionality.

You may also wish to set up the classroom in an informal setting, perhaps placing the tables aside and arranging the chairs in a semi-circle.

Ice-Breaker



Activity 1

A good ice-breaker for this topic would be the Sun Shines On. It's quite a simple game: pupils sit in a circle/semi-circle and there should be one less chair - as there always needs to be someone in the middle. So, the Sun Shines On the person in the middle. The person in the middle will start off by saying the Sun Shines On..., it can be anything e.g. who likes EastEnders. Then if anyone does watch EastEnders they will get up to find a seat. The aim is not to be in the middle. They cannot sit on either side of their seat, if they get up they must move and cannot sit back down. The game should start with general things and gradually lead into bullying scenarios. One of the things that you may wish to throw in, if they struggle, is the Sun Shines On anyone who has ever called their mate "gay".

The aim of the game is to generate discussion.

What is homophobia?



Activity 2

This should be recorded on two different flipchart pages.

Start with homophobia. Go around the circle, asking each young person what they think homophobia is? Here are some things that they may come up with and if they don't, you could raise with them.

What is homophobic bullying?

Divide the page into four and give each box one of the following categories;
Physical, Verbal, Mental/Emotional, Sexual and Cyber.

Before you start collecting examples for the categories get an overview - in one sentence - of what they think homophobic bullying is.

DCSF definition of homophobic bullying:

"Homophobic bullying is often present in an environment that fails to challenge and respond to homophobia. It can take the form of rumour-mongering, social isolation, text messaging and frightening looks, as well as more obvious forms of bullying. It does not just affect young people who identify as LGBT.

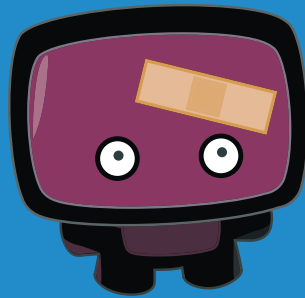
"In schools, homophobic bullying can directly affect any young person whose life choices, interests or needs do not conform to accepted gender norms, as well as adult members of the school community who are LGBT. This can, in turn, affect the whole school community who are LGBT and anyone who may have friends or relatives who are LGBT... This can, in turn, affect the whole school community by giving out the message that bullying is tolerated, and that the school environment is safe."

Department for Education and Skills, Stand up for us, challenging Homophobia in schools (2004)

Once they've got the idea, you ask for examples of the five categories:

Physical:

- Punching
- Kicking
- Tripping
- Pulling hair



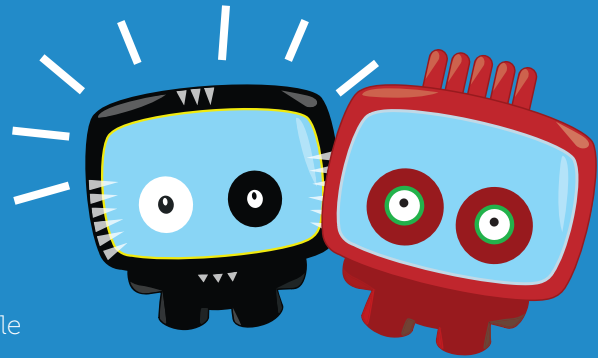
Verbal:

Calling someone or something gay when they/it are not. (Discussion point. When this point arises ask why the term gay is used in a derogatory manner.)

- Name calling such as poof, gay, dyke, lezza, batty boy etc.
- Shouting insults
- Rumour spreading
- Horrible comments when they walk by about them or their family
- Gossiping

Mental/Emotional:

- Name calling
- Rumour spreading
- Assumptions of sexuality
- Passing notes around
- Excluding out of group
- Making someone feel uncomfortable
- Passing around horrible notes
- Dirty looks when they walk by
- Leaving someone out of a group because of their family's sexuality
- Threats



Sexual:

- Inappropriate touching
- Sexual comments
- Pretending to be LGBT

Cyber:

- Hate sites
- Sending text messages about someone's sexuality or presumed sexuality
- Prank calls
- Sending inappropriate pictures or videos
- Editing pictures

Aim to spend about 15 minutes on this, with discussion.

Some of these topics may cross over so you can make this clear to them.

Key issues facing LGBT young people and the impact of homophobic bullying



This should be a discussion on the following things:
Fear of isolation in school - if and when LGBT young people come out in school, the usual reaction is to isolate them. This can happen from teachers and pupils alike.

- Discrimination - if and when a LGBT young person 'comes out' they face being discriminated against by friends and family.
- Attainment at school - when homophobic bullying is experienced at school, like any other form of bullying, grades start dropping and attention levels will decrease.
- Emotional well being - it has been shown in international studies that gay and bisexual men are more than four times more likely than straight men to report serious suicide attempts. Young LGBT people can become depressed as they feel that there is nothing they can do, therefore are more likely to commit suicide.
- Reporting homophobic bullying - this will always be hard for LGBT young people: they may feel as if they are forced to come out in order to get help. Teachers may also inform a parent of the bullying: this, also, could be seen as being forced to 'come out'.

Positive Messages



At this point, divide the group into three sub-groups and give them 15 minutes to come up with two 'still frames'. The still frames should show the impact of homophobic bullying. For example, the group can work in pairs or small groups to act out homophobic bullying scenarios. (See the examples in the Appendix)

Once the frames have been decided upon, the group should then take pictures of the frames - ideally with mobile phones - and come up with a positive message. Once the picture has been taken, the photos and their positive message could be distributed around the school via Bluetooth or text message. You could also email the pictures. If you have a school newsletter, it could appear, perhaps, as a comic strip. Encourage the mini-campaign to be put up on the school's website and possibly individual student's social networking profiles. This is about activism and understanding how beneficial positive messaging can be.

The interesting point here is that students would be using some of the very technologies they use to spread negative messages to spread positive messages. If, as a school, you would prefer not to take this approach, the pictures could be taken with a regular camera and printed, or hand-drawn on a storyboard. This activity could easily be extended into a second lesson and the campaign element taken further.

Beatbullying would be very happy to receive some of these pictures if the school deems it appropriate.

Appendix

LGBT SCENARIOS

Dillon is a Year 8 student and is always last to be picked for basketball: his classmates think he is gay because he is always wearing pink sweatbands.

Samantha is a good netball player. Recently, the girls in her netball team have become jealous because she has been scouted for the GB netball team and the girls have started a rumour in the school that she is a lesbian.

Jimmy's mother and father have recently divorced because his father was attracted to men. Jimmy was really upset and told one of his best mates, Sam. Since this conversation Sam hasn't been hanging around with Jimmy and has told his mates that Jimmy is gay like his dad.

Karen is a really popular girl in school and has all her friends on her Facebook account. Recently two of her mates deleted her off their friends' list. Karen didn't like this and set up a fake profile saying these two girls are having a sexual relationship.

Steve and Scott are best mates, and have known each other since they were five years old. Because they always do things together other people in the school have spread a rumour that they are gay.

Steve is a popular gay guy in the school, and started up an after school club for those who need help and support for being bullied in and outside school. Simon is a new, Year 7 student, and has recently been bullied for being too smart. He heard about how good the after school club was and decided to get help. Steve stopped him and said this club is only for those people with homosexual problems not for nerds like him.

The boys in John's school are always shouting "homo", because he always sings in class and wants to become a singer like Beyonce.

Peter never gets invited to the local football games because the boys think his clothes are too tight, too bright and loud. He doesn't wear hoodies and baggy trousers like they do.

Mitchell is very popular with the girls at his school: this makes the guys jealous and they think he is gay because he never hangs round with boys. So when they see Mitchell they always brush past him and trip him up.

Geoff is a well-liked gay guy in the school. Recently he has been receiving prank calls and threatening emails from an anonymous person, saying: "all homos should die".

Joe is a very popular and trendy person and wears the latest fashions. Joe decided to get both his ears pierced like his idol David Beckham. The boys in his class now stay away from Joe, and say he is gay because he has his ears pierced.