

# LGBT+ inclusion:

## Guidance for union reps and officers

### What's happening around LGBT+ inclusion?

LGBT+ inclusion is nothing new and since the [repeal of Section 28 in 2003](#), many nurseries, schools and colleges have developed excellent resources and activities in this area of education. However, the public debate around RSE and LGBT+ inclusion has brought the issue into the spotlight and some members are facing situations where Stop RSE and similar groups have been actively campaigning within school communities to disrupt the teaching of RSE to children, focusing on primary schools.

Members have been raising concerns that the media storm around LGBT+ inclusion and publicised parent protests are leading to a claw-back of LGBT+ inclusive teaching and ethos in some education settings as school leaders have become wary of unwanted media attention and/or significant parent protest.

RSE groups state religious opposition to 'LGBT+ content' as justification for their campaigns. Over the last year there have been protests outside Parkfield Primary School and Anderton Park Primary in Birmingham with similar meetings across the country, pressuring schools to remove LGBT+ inclusion and threatening to withdraw children from RSE or even from education altogether.

While anti-RSE groups targeting Muslim parents and carers have received the most media attention, there are similar groups campaigning across other faith communities including [Anglican](#), [Christian](#) and [Jewish](#) communities. Similarly, LGBT+ led and LGBT+ inclusive faith groups have been vocal about their support for LGBT+ inclusive RSE, see more [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

NEU members facing these challenges have been creative and proactive in countering the negativity, presenting clear evidence to support LGBT+ inclusion and gathering support from LGBT+ allies and relevant stakeholders including local councillors, local faith networks and LGBT+ specialist services.

### What can I do to support LGBT+ inclusion?

The NEU suggests five principles for supporting LGBT+ inclusion:

1. **Voice**
2. **Evidence-based**
3. **Collectivise**
4. **Community**
5. **Pro-active**

#### Step one: Speak with LGBT+ staff and pupils

The needs and experiences of LGBT+ people in your school community including pupils, parents, carers, staff and governors must remain central to your organising and policy work in this area. Developing plans or policy on behalf of those most directly affected is never going to be as effective as what you develop in collaboration with people most affected by the issues.

Speak to LGBT+ members in your local area to learn from good practice and collaborate across schools. If there are several LGBT+ members in your workplace/district/region, schedule a meeting together. Connect with a diverse range of members in your school or area who can support the work and ensure the ideas and expertise of LGBT+ members are at the centre of developing ideas. Think about who is and who

isn't represented at your meetings and reach out to others to increase diversity of representation.

### Step two: Collectivise LGBT+ inclusion, identifying good practice and barriers.

Every school and district should be having a conversation about LGBT+ inclusion now. As workplace rep, organise a meeting in your school specifically to discuss LGBT+ inclusion. As district secretary, clear some time at your next district meeting for a focused discussion on LGBT+ inclusion.

" Since it was the first time we introduced LGBT+ language in my school, we produced a video with definitions of LGB and T. Later, I was asked why I didn't include +, Q, I, A etc but we need to start with the baby steps sometimes. Now my students understand these terms and that can be built on. I wouldn't throw too much new information at them. It was also to make sure staff understood these terms and could confidently discuss them with pupils."

Classroom Teacher

An initial meeting is an opportunity to:

- Share relevant information including details on the new Relationships Education/RSE guidance, NEU position on LGBT+ inclusion and RSE and helpful resources and facts relevant to your context
- Learn about good practice already happening in your school/district, as well as any issues and gaps
- Gauge the level of understanding and support for LGBT+ inclusion, determining your next steps and identifying potential challenges
- Agree an action plan going forward. If union members are not supportive/aware, you may consider arranging training or guest speakers at a follow-up meeting before an action plan can be determined. If challenges are identified, spend some time discussing strategies to overcome and next steps. Document the key findings including barriers and good practice, as well as any actions identified.

### Step three: Develop and deliver action plan

Depending on your context and stage of progress your action plan will differ. You may need to set up meetings with SLT and/or MAT-leadership. In advance of these meetings, prepare your evidence-based case setting out the need for proactive approaches to LGBT+ inclusion with clear asks while drawing attention to existing good practice, and responses to challenges.

In addition to this you may arrange a meeting with the district or branch secretary to look at the issue across a local authority area or multi-academy trust. Or you may seek advice from the NEU Adviceline and/or reach out to community-based LGBT+ groups for support and guidance. Alternatively, you may be at a stage where a working group is what is needed to take forward policy changes and inclusion-related activity. Use the [Equal and inclusive schools and colleges framework](#) and the [Negotiating for LGBT+ inclusion flowchart](#) to support you in your action planning.

## What can I do if leadership is back-tracking/resisting LGBT+ inclusion?

With RSE and LGBT+ inclusion consistently hitting the press in 2019, members have been contacting the union seeking advice after having been asked to either remove LGBT+ inclusion from their classrooms, or to convert LGBT+ events like Pride into more general equality events. Follow the steps above and highlight to your SLT/ Governors that this approach is inconsistent with current legislation and will hinder schools' preparation for the September 2020 implementation deadline for Relationships Education/RSE. Contact your district secretary and the Adviceline for further advice and guidance and look to collectivise the issue across the local authority area. Use the [Negotiating for LGBT+ inclusion flowchart](#) to help in your action planning.

## Anti-RSE leaflets are being distributed in my community. What should I do?

As soon as you become aware of leaflets in your area, contact your local Union office.

NEU advice is that schools seek a borough/district/academy-trust wide approach to the issue to safeguard your school and your staff. Whether you are in a multi-academy trust or a maintained school, the local authority should be made aware of the issue as they hold responsibility for safeguarding children. Aim initially to take the focus off the school and its staff and onto the local authority. Your local authority may have a plan to support LGBT+ inclusion. If they don't, present the evidence-based case and signpost them to guidance [here](#).

Speak to local LGBT+ members about their fears, concerns and needs and to regional LGBT+ organising forum representatives as they have access to information, peer support and resources from other districts locally and nationally.

A significant feature of the Birmingham school-gate protests is that the organisers of the protests did not have children at the school, indicating the deliberate wedge anti-RSE lobbyists, and elements of the media, are seeking to create between members and parents/carers. This is a false division. Parents/carers and members have campaigned successfully together in recent years around many issues including SEN pupils needs, assessment regimes and academisation, demonstrating the strength of many school communities. Communicating with staff and parents/carers of the mutually beneficial relationship between parent/carers and staff is essential to moving this conversation forward.

Your action plan will differ depending on your context and the advice from your district office, but some steps may include:

- Setting up a meeting with the local authority and representatives from each school in the area to raise the issues, concerns and challenges and develop a borough-wide approach
- Setting up a meeting with parents and carers to counter the misinformation and provide real examples of what is being taught in school and/or
- Utilising existing parent representative structures (parent/carer governors, parents and carers networks, etc.) to share correct information and develop strategies together for overcoming misinformation.

## Anti-LGBT+ meetings or protests are being organised in my district. What should I do?

As soon as you become aware of meetings/protests in your area, contact your local Union office and develop a plan together.

NEU advice is that schools seek a borough/district/academy-trust wide approach to the issue to safeguard your school and your staff. Where meetings or protests are already being organised, collectivising is key. Follow the steps above where possible but if time is tight, ensure your head/district office approaches your local authority for an urgent conversation.

If public meetings are planned, you may consider preparing and attending the meeting together with someone from the NEU district office with a view to presenting accurate information, countering myths, easing tensions and winning over those present. Heads should seek to understand whether there are parent/carers present at the meeting. You may plan to bring NEU inclusion leaflets to share at the meeting, or other materials from the classroom/school to counter misinformation.

Where school-gate protests are planned, consider inviting parents and carers to a meeting in advance of protests to provide further opportunity for dialogue. Parents and carers should be asked to consider the potentially harmful nature of anti-LGBT+ inclusion and anti-RSE protests. Explain to parents and carers the teachers' duty to 'establish a safe and stimulating environment for pupils, rooted in mutual respect' and discuss how this particular type of school-gate protest may be upsetting or unsafe for children and young people. Provide parents/carers with information about more constructive ways to have their views heard at the school and share information about the [harmful nature of similar protests](#) in other parts of the country.

## What advice do other members give?

Here are members' tips for advocating for LGBT+ inclusion:

### 1. Voice

- **Support pupils.** Create a space for children and young people to discuss what they think and support pupil-led campaigning.

### 2. Evidence-based

- **Listen to people.** Find out where the opposition is coming from—is it from SLT or governors? Is it an unrepresentative but vocal group of people? Is it external forces? Find out who you need to convince and what their concerns are.
- **Seek advice.** LGBT+ inclusion is both an equality and a workplace rights issue. Your local union officers and reps will be able to help you lay out your negotiation strategy for LGBT+ inclusion in your workplace.
- **Get support from other union activists.** Informal union networks on WhatsApp and Facebook are active in many regions and can be a great source of emotional and practical peer support both from within and outside of your school community.
- **Bring in training.** There are lots of brilliant specialist organisations doing work on LGBT+ inclusion, including Educate and Celebrate and the Proud Trust. Bringing in specialists from outside can lift everyone's knowledge and understanding levels.
- **Build a strong evidence-based case.** Use the information here to build a case about the need for LGBT+ inclusion. Give the issue time and be prepared. The evidence for LGBT+ inclusion is indisputable, it just needs to be presented well and contextualised in your school community. There is a lot of misinformation about LGBT+ inclusion. There are also people with strong views that you

may need to challenge. Gathering relevant information, including the context for the views of people in your school community that may be different to your own, is key to successful union organising and to effective policy change.

### 3. Collectivise

- **Collectivise!** Hold a union meeting to identify and build a community of allies. This may include staff, governors, parents/carers and children themselves. By collectivising the issue, you will know that there are many people who support you. This will make it harder for unsupportive peers to state their opposition also.
- **Integrate.** Connect LGBT+ inclusive education to other equality-related school activities or priorities and values.
- **Negotiate a budget.** Negotiate with your head to identify a budget for staff training or creative cross-curricular activities. Organisations that provide this support will have lots of testimonials on their website to help build your case.

### 4. Community

- **Community.** Schools are vital parts of the community. Building relationships with a range of people from across the wider community, from faith leaders to LGBT+ youth centres to councillors, will support you in this work.

### 5. Pro-active

- **Evaluation and inspection.** Where you have been running programmes in the school already, use evaluation and/or inspection evidence to highlight the success of the programme and the benefits for the whole school community. Use Ofsted evidence if you think that will have more sway in your school.
- **Be pro-active.** Don't wait for an issue to arise; have a meeting now to discuss any issues and needs and be ahead of the game.

“ Find allies within your workplace as best you can. Any member of staff can be powerful for feeling supported. Then you go to the top. I've had lots of experience of being fobbed off by SLT without witnesses.”

Classroom Teacher



# Negotiating for LGBT+ inclusion



If you are facing challenges and/or barriers

