

LGBT+ inclusion:

Guidance for heads, senior leaders, PHSE and safeguarding leads

How should I approach the issue of LGBT+ inclusion?

LGBT+ inclusion has a strong legal basis and without an inclusive approach, schools would have a difficult time evidencing how they are meeting the requirements of equality, anti-bullying and curriculum legislation. Using the [NEU equal and inclusive schools and colleges framework](#) to develop your plan for LGBT+ inclusion will help you ensure a whole school approach.

How do we decide what is age appropriate?

Although the 2020 guidance refers to 'age appropriate' content, the NEU does not believe this description is very useful in determining content. Relationships education and health education should begin in primary school and be developed and delivered according to children's developmental age and lived experiences. This is a more helpful framework for enabling and preparing students for healthy relationships than focusing on what is 'age-appropriate'.

Any topic in relationships education, RSE or health education can be taught in a way that is appropriate to the age and maturity of pupils, but staff need training on how to do this well. For an example of this, look at the [UNESCO guidance](#) which separates sexuality education into eight key concepts that can be delivered in an age appropriate way from age 5 to 18+.

Which school policies are relevant to LGBT+ inclusion?

Clear and accessible policies on Relationships (and Sex for secondary) Education, staff and pupil wellbeing, equality and diversity, anti-bullying and safeguarding form a strong foundation for LGBT+ inclusion.

Required

- **Safeguarding policy** should cover how children are safeguarded from LGBT+ abuse and harassment. This may also relate to your RE/RSE policy as it is about preventative as well as responsive safeguarding.
- **Anti-bullying policy and strategy.** Check the policy makes reference to all protected characteristics and includes specific reference to homo/bi/trans phobic bullying prevention and response.
- **Equality and diversity policy** should reflect the school's culture and ethos and show that the school's approach is inclusive.
- **Relationships Education/Relationships and sex education policy.** Under the new guidance, schools will be required to have an up-to-date policy for teaching Relationships Education/Relationships and sex education. They will be required to consult with parents and carers about their RSE policy. For an NEU good practice example, see [here](#).

Recommended

- **Staff and pupil wellbeing** policies should specify the schools' commitments to LGBT+ staff and pupil wellbeing and outline the steps the school will take to ensure this safety and wellbeing.

How should our school engage with parents/carers around this issue?

Schools are a valuable resource not just for pupils but also for the whole family and the wider community. Good parent/carer engagement has positive impacts both on the effectiveness of education and on community spirit. [Research](#) has found:

A critical dimension of effective teaching and learning is the relationship between the teacher, their pupils and their parents [sic]... the degree and quality of engagement that parents [sic] have with their child's learning is a crucial factor outside the school environment.

Establishing meaningful relationships with all parents/carers as part of your school's year-round approach will mean you are more likely to have the trust and support of the wider school community in all the work you do, including LGBT+ inclusion.

While schools should be consulting with parents and carers on all school policies, the 2020 guidance makes specific reference to parental consultation around Relationships Education/RSE policy formation. The Department for Education then issued clarifications, stating:

Schools will be required to consult with parents [sic] when developing and reviewing their policies for Relationships Education and RSE, which will inform schools' decisions on when and how certain content is covered. Effective consultation gives the space and time for parents [sic] to input, ask questions, share concerns and for the school to decide the way forward. Schools will listen to parent's views, and then make a reasonable decision as to how they wish to proceed. What is taught, and how, is ultimately a decision for the school governing body and consultation does not provide a parental veto on curriculum content.

Parents and carers at my school are resistant to RSE and/or LGBT+ inclusion. What can I do?

Early and effective consultation enabling the presentation of accurate information, actual classroom resources and open discussions may prevent situations from escalating and/or outside pressure groups becoming involved in your school community.

"Our trans students made and edited a film on their experiences to be played at assembly."

Classroom teacher

Members have shared these tips for good parent/carer engagement:

1. Voice

- **Representation.** Parents/carers are more likely to be engaged with a school they feel connected to and part of. If you have identified a lack of diversity within staff and governance teams, take positive steps to diversify staffing to more appropriately reflect the school community. While you are developing this, invite guest speakers reflective of the parent/carer community to events and consider co-opting representative community members onto the governing body. Local BME, faith disabled and LGBT+ groups may be a good starting point for identifying key people.

2. Evidence-based

- **Provide concrete examples** of the curriculum content to parents/carers, in the same way as consultations on puberty lessons.
- **Be prepared.** Have a strong evidence base clearly presented with actual examples of resources used in classrooms, particularly for younger children, and clear explanations around how the school has determined what

is age appropriate. Remember the levels of knowledge will vary across the parent/carer community and tailor your preparations accordingly.

- **Actively counter the misinformation**, don't ignore it. There is a lot of misinformation in circulation and anti-RSE groups are targeting faith communities. Share curriculum resources with parents and carers for them to be able to understand what is (and isn't) being taught, as well as the reasons why. Share evidence on the impacts of homo/bi/transphobic bullying on mental and physical wellbeing as well as attainment levels.
[General guidance LGBT+ inclusion](#)
- **Ground your approach in school values/ethos and the Equality Act.** Use this as a starting point for building agreement on what is and isn't acceptable in the school community. Your school values may be what attracted parent/carers to the school in the first place.

" My older students set up a GoFundMe and raised the money themselves for LGBT+ inclusive books for key stage 2. They wanted the library to be inclusive. I was so proud."

Classroom teacher

3. Collectivise

- **Utilise existing engagement.** Involving parents and carers in LGBT+ inclusion work is not effective when it is undertaken as a stand-alone consultation event or a singular communication to parents/carers. Discussions around LGBT+ inclusion should be embedded in existing processes and structures, including with parent governors, and through other parent representative structures and within discussions about your school's goals for the curriculum.

4. Community

- **Embed learning.** At information sessions, provide parents and carers with guidance on how they can embed the learning at home.
- **Remove barriers.** Identify and remove potential barriers faced by parents/carers not currently involved in the school community. For example, where there are language barriers limiting parent/carer involvement, utilise multi-lingual staff or interpreters, local Black community centres may be able to provide this service at a discounted rate. Where there are barriers for working parents/carers, provide advance notice for meetings and alternate meeting times so parents/carers have options.
- **Think creatively about accessibility.** Provide British Sign Language (BSL) or Languages Other Than English (LOTE) interpreters if needed so that you are not relying on some parents/carers to interpret for others. Make sure all information you present is clear and accessible for adults from a range of educational backgrounds. Ensure there are different ways for people to contribute to discussions, not just whole group discussion where some people are likely to be more vocal than others.
- **Provide a range of options for engagement.** Some parents/carers may feel reluctant to come to a social occasion involving alcohol, while others may find it intimidating to attend a formal meeting. Consult with parents/carers about how they would like to contribute to the school community and provide a range of options including inviting parents/carer support in the classroom and on field trips, involvement in festivals and events throughout the year, coffee mornings and issue-based meetings that strengthen your school community.

" The head boy in our school who is openly gay, runs the LGBTQ group in our school"

Classroom teacher

- **Allow enough time** for discussion. Parents/ carers want to be heard. Not allowing enough time may create a situation of frustration.
- **Bring in external speakers to help facilitate conversation.** Where you have supportive local councillors, invite them into discussions. Where you have active local LGBT+ youth groups or specialist services, invite them in to talk to parents and carers from their perspective. In faith settings, invite in LGBT+ and LGBT+ supportive faith leaders to share their perspectives and knowledge.
- **Utilise the people resources you have** within your school community. At least 1 in 10 young people will identify as LGBT+ at some time in their lives. A higher percentage will have a family member who is LGBT+. Consider how you can invite LGBT+ family members in to support your work around LGBT+ inclusion. Also consider the impacts on LGBT+ pupils and staff and discuss how they would like to be involved. In many schools, it is the pupils who have made a stand for LGBT+ inclusion. Having young people present to parents and carers why they think LGBT+ inclusion is a very powerful intervention.

5. Pro-active

- **Use your creativity.** Use the creative skills you employ in your work with children in this session- make it interactive, fun and a learning experience for everyone.

“ In my previous school, a Catholic grandmother helped me protest my school’s poor decisions around LGBT+ inclusion.”

Classroom teacher

Parents/carers and community members are sharing staff members personal details on social media platforms. Are they allowed to do this?

No, they are not allowed. All employees have rights.

Before an incident occurs

Schools can be proactive about informing parents and carers about the parameters of social media use within the school community. This includes:

- Providing guidelines on what Apps can and cannot be used for with clear examples, for example, arranging play dates and pick-ups, social events for parents and carers. This guidance should be clear that apps cannot be used to name, criticise or share personal information about staff or pupils.
- Where people have dual roles as staff member and parent, staff are entitled to be a member of private parent/carer groups, but they should participate as a parent/carer and should not take part in any discussions about staff or pupils and should remain professional in any other discussions.
- Parents and carers should be reminded that if they have a complaint about a member of staff or a pupil, they should follow school procedures.

After an incident has occurred

If you are aware of potentially discriminatory, offensive or defamatory posts about a member of staff (including yourself) on a parents' and carers private group, you should inform the governors and senior leadership team and contact your NEU school representative.

School leaders should warn parents and carers of their responsibilities not to harass or discriminate against or make public defamatory statements about staff. Parents/carers should also be reminded that anti-LGBT+ hate speech is a crime. For more information on hate crime see [here](#). School leaders should let parents and carers know what steps will be taken by the school/employer if an incident does occur. The school/employer will take steps to prevent such conduct. School leaders should remind parents and carers that if they have a concern or complaint about a member of staff, they should use the appropriate school procedures. Copies of the procedures should be provided to parents and carers.

If you suspect this is happening to you, contact your NEU rep to discuss how to engage with your employer. You may also consider reporting the incident to the police as a hate crime, particularly if you are concerned about a pattern of abuse, or escalating abuse.

Negotiating for LGBT+ inclusion



If you are facing challenges and/or barriers

