

LGBT+ inclusion:

Guidance for school governors/trustees

As a school governor/trustee, what is my role around LGBT+ inclusion?

You hold ultimate responsibility for many aspects of school life. In relation to LGBT+ inclusion, these aspects of your role are particularly relevant:

- **Compliance with the Equality Act.** LGBT+ inclusion is an equality issue. The Equality Act's general and specific public sector equality duties mean that schools and colleges must have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
 - Advance equality of opportunity.
 - Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Publish equality objectives and information demonstrating how they are doing this.
- **Pupil wellbeing.** LGBT+ inclusion is a mental health, anti-bullying and safeguarding issue. Without active LGBT+ inclusion, LGBT+ staff and pupils are likely to suffer academically and personally in your school community. Under anti-bullying legislation, your school must actively prevent bullying, not just respond to incidents.
- **Staff wellbeing.** LGBT+ inclusion is a workplace issue. Inclusion is necessary to ensure dignity and fair treatment at work for LGBT+ staff members.
- **Vision, values and ethos.** You are responsible for ensuring the school's practices are consistent with its values and ethos, even

where these may be different to your own. For example, many schools have fairness, kindness, respect, integrity and/or achievement as part of their values structure. Look to your school values as part of the foundations for LGBT+ inclusion and ask questions about how your school is promoting those values.

- **Educational attainment.** LGBT+ inclusion impacts on pupils' engagement with learning. LGBT+ pupils' access to education is affected if they are made to feel unsafe or unwelcome at school, and this might affect both mental health and educational attainment.
- **Preparation for the new RSE guidance.** Your school is required to have an RSE/ Relationships Education policy ready for September 2020. Your role in overseeing the development of this policy, including the consultation process, is vital to ensuring the policy is consistent with school values and legally compliant. See here for the NEU's guidance on RSE/Relationship Education policy creation.

Government guidance on school governance states:

Every effort should be made to ensure the organisation's ethos promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for those with different faiths and beliefs; and encourage students to respect other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and accompanying guidance. [Governance Handbook 2019](#)

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I don't agree with LGBT+ inclusion. How can I ensure my voice is heard?

As a Governor, your duty is to ensure the school meets legal and professional frameworks. This is not optional. The Equality Act 2010 applies to all schools as providers of education to the pupils in their care, as providers of a service or public function and (where applicable) in their role as employers. The school board is responsible for compliance with the public sector equality duties of the Act and the specific education sections (part 4) for school pupils. It is a requirement of your role that you put personal views aside and look at what is required for the pupils from a legal, educational and equalities point of view.

What questions should I be asking about LGBT+ inclusion?

There are many questions to ask as a school governor, here are some starting points:

- How do LGBT+ pupils in our school feel?
- How do LGBT+ parents/carers in our school community feel?
- How do LGBT+ staff feel?
- Are there barriers to people identifying as LGBT+ in our school community? What can we do about this?
- Have we spoken to LGBT+ staff and pupils about their experiences? Should we arrange to do this?
- Are there LGBT+ people on our Board? How can we ensure this voice is heard at Governance level?
- How many incidents of homo/bi/transphobic discrimination or abuse have been reported

in our school community? What happened in response to the complaints?

- Have there been incidents of homo/bi/transphobic discrimination or abuse reported in press in our local area/village/city? How has this been discussed with pupils?
- If there are no reports of homo/bi/transphobic discrimination or abuse is this because there are no incidents or due to a lack of awareness?
- What preventative measures have we put in place around homo/bi/transphobic bullying?
- How are we celebrating diversity in our school community? What events do we celebrate? What else could we be doing?
- What do we need to do to be ready for the September 2020 deadline for the new RSE curriculum?
- Do our staff need training or other forms of support around LGBT+ inclusion? What are the costs of not accessing this training?
- What barriers to LGBT+ inclusion might we face? How can we pre-emptively build support and community in our school?

Where can I get support/ more information?

There is plenty of information available online for school governors and trustees. Here are some helpful starting places:

governorsforschools.org.uk/blog/how-can-governors-support-the-new-statutory-relationships-education/

governorsforschools.org.uk/blog/guest-post-how-can-governors-support-lgbt-inclusivity-in-schools/