

# Dos and Don'ts – tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying



This resource is intended to be used as part of the wider **Inspiring Equality in Education** programme tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. It may be that you want to work with staff in your school or college to come up with your own list – or to use this list as part of a staff training exercise.

This list has been influenced by the lived experiences of children and young people. Their courage, support and influence is invaluable to our work as we look forward to a day where no child should have to suffer bullying.

## Do

- **Celebrate difference in all its many forms.** There are many, many opportunities to celebrate difference in all its forms on a daily basis within schools. Cherish diversity in your students and make it absolutely possible for any student – regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, faith, disability or special educational need to thrive in your school environment. Test it. Ask students what the barriers are – and break them down one by one.
- **Ensure the school curriculum contributes to preventing all forms of bullying.** Use your PSHE education curriculum to equip students with the knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes they need to keep themselves and others safe from bullying, and to recognise and challenge prejudice in all its forms. Preventative education and the development of protective characteristics are an essential element of the whole-school approach.
- **Listen.** Be ever alert to behaviour and attitudes in your school community. Be a talking school where anyone can speak out and feel supported if they face prejudice, discrimination or bullying.
- **Challenge all forms of prejudice.** If we genuinely care about the wellbeing of all children and young people then it's vital not to pick and choose which type of prejudice matters most. All forms of prejudice should be tackled – and that includes verbal comments and harmful attitudes related to sexuality and gender.
- **Lead from the front.** There are always individual teachers that are passionate about tackling bullying but they need the support of a strong, united senior leadership team that takes all forms of bullying seriously, and are not afraid to take risks and challenge the status quo if it means all students feel valued and supported.
- **Ask what would make a difference.** Every incident of bullying is an opportunity to learn or do something differently. Consider what needs to change. Or even better – do this before any bullying happens. What would it take for anyone to be able to walk into this school or college and feel valued and supported?

- **Involve the whole community.** This is everyone's issue. Make sure that students, parents and carers, staff and the wider community all know that you take a strong position when it comes to tackling bullying – whether it happens in school or online. Make sure your anti-bullying policy is all inclusive and shared far and wide, and that it includes tackling HBT+ bullying.
- **Create forums for support and discussion.** Help young people to set up their own support groups in school. These groups should then influence school direction and strategy in relation to hbt+ bullying.
- **Know where to get advice.** Find out what local services are available for HBT+ young people and staff in your local area and share this information.
- **Set clear ground rules for any anti-bullying lessons:** these should include taking a non-judgmental approach, listening to one another, making no assumptions, avoiding offensive language, keep the conversation in the classroom (the table below sets out how these can be translated into accessible language for pupils).

Ground rule	What this might mean to pupils
<b>Openness</b>	We will be open and honest, but not discuss directly our own or others' personal/private lives. We will discuss general situations as examples but will not use names or descriptions which could identify anyone. We will not put anyone 'on the spot'.
<b>Keep the conversation in the room</b>	We feel safe discussing general issues relating to mental health within this space, and we know that our teacher will not repeat what is said in the classroom unless they are concerned we are at risk, in which case they will follow the school's safeguarding policy.
<b>Non-judgemental approach</b>	It is okay for us to disagree with another person's point of view but we will not judge, make fun of, or put anybody down. We will 'challenge the opinion not the person'.
<b>Right to pass</b>	Taking part is important. However, we have the right to pass on answering a question or participating in an activity.
<b>Make no assumptions</b>	We will not make assumptions about people's values, attitudes, behaviours, life experiences or feelings.
<b>Listen to others</b>	We will listen to the other person's point of view and expect to be listened to.
<b>Using</b>	We will use the correct terms for the things we will be discussing rather than the slang terms, as they can be offensive. If we are not sure what

<b>language</b>	the correct term is we will ask our teacher.
<b>Asking questions</b>	We know that there are no stupid questions. We do not ask questions to deliberately try to embarrass anyone else. There is a question box for anonymous questions.
<b>Seeking help and advice</b>	If we need further help or advice, we know how and where to seek it confidentially, both in school and in the community. We will encourage friends to seek help if we think they need it.

## Don't

- Assume you know what's going on.** In schools there is so much that goes on under the radar. Take time to survey students and staff about how they feel about school– and that includes how inclusive the school environment is and whether or not it keeps all students – **and staff** safe.
- Exclude anyone from sex and relationships education.** Don't just assume that all students are heterosexual and looking forward to being a husband and wife combo with 2.4 children. This won't reflect the families that your students come from – and will alienate young people that have other plans and desires. All young people need to be given the language and tools they need to enjoy positive and safe relationships.
- Lose sight of who is most important:** Never plan your PSHE and SRE programme based on the sensitivities of teachers and/or the perceived sensitivities of parents, rather than the needs of students.
- Say 'if only you weren't so gay...bi...trans....so DIFFERENT'.** It is simply not a solution for children to act more 'straight'. Young people must be supported to be comfortable in their own skin – anything else is downright dangerous and irresponsible – with potential for serious impact to health and wellbeing in the long term. **Go for short term solutions to long term problems.** Children and young people that are bullied want the situation to change long term. That means taking time to understand whether the behaviour is just down to an individual (who will need support to change) or influenced by a wider culture of prejudice and disrespect. If it's the latter – it's time to go back to the **Dos** and work to change the school culture.
- Make it impossible to access information.** We know why schools install software to restrict what students can access online through school portals but this can make it difficult for students and staff to access information and advice that they might desperately need. Make sure this information is available through other means if necessary. Put up posters, hand out leaflets and ensure sources of support are clearly signposted through PSHE education lessons, including teaching about how to access support and what will happen if they do, rather than simply listing sources of support that exist.