



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

REPORT

Celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion: good practice in supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners in schools and colleges

Our response to Estyn's report and recommendations on Provision for LGBT Pupils.

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The report is in response to a request by the Welsh Government for advice on effective support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners, as well as those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Summary of main findings

Where provision is most effective

In schools and colleges with a strong culture of inclusion, LGBT learners thrive. In these cases, they feel as confident as their peers to express their feelings and beliefs. They enjoy a strong sense of wellbeing and play a full part in the life of the school or college. In these schools or colleges, nearly all learners view same-sex relationships as another form of diversity to be celebrated along with other protected characteristics, such as race, religion and disability.

These schools and colleges review their curriculum to incorporate LGBT issues in an age appropriate way to good effect. As a result, learners regularly see positive LGBT role models depicted through their learning experiences and in

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their school or college environment. The school or college engages actively with parents and the wider community, including faith groups, to ensure that they understand the organisation's approach to celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion. They recognise that some stakeholders may challenge this and listen and take account of differing views, but ultimately act in the best interests of learners. Leaders ensure that the curriculum and learning environment challenge gender stereotypes and tackle related issues as they arise. Learners begin to understand the negative effect of gender stereotyping from a young age. Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying is infrequent and dealt with robustly when it arises. Leaders work with staff, learners to develop their anti-bullying policy and procedures to ensure they recognise, record and address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. They create an environment where staff and learners feel confident to challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and the use of homophobic language. Leaders put in place effective systems to ensure that learners know how to approach speaking to a member of staff about personal issues, including those related to LGBT issues and 'coming out'. They ensure that specific pastoral staff have the skills and knowledge to support learners to make safe decisions, but also that all staff have the confidence to respond to the questions and concerns around LGBT matters raised by learners. Pupil and learner voice groups provide a valuable support network for LGBT young people. In the best cases, they provide valuable feedback to schools and colleges on the experience of LGBT learners. Leaders consider this information carefully to adjust their policies and curriculum to improve the educational experience of LGBT learners and promote inclusion for all. Schools and colleges liaise well with parents and carers to address the challenges faced by transgender learners, those who are questioning their gender identity and those who are transitioning. They recognise that there is no standard or simple solution to these challenges, and there is a need for flexibility and dialogue with all involved. Where provision is strongest, in around a third of schools and in most colleges, leaders demonstrate a clear moral purpose towards promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity. They establish an ethos that champions individuality, tolerance and respect. This impacts on the wellbeing of all learners positively. In the most inclusive schools and colleges, LGBT staff feel able to discuss their personal lives and relationships with pupils and colleagues within guidelines that apply equally to LGBT and heterosexual staff.

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Leaders prioritise consideration of learners' wellbeing and mental health in their self-evaluation arrangements. They use the information they gather to consider provision for LGBT learners and how well their curriculum and learning environment encourages the celebration of diversity and promotes inclusion. The gathering of the views of all learners, particularly those who are LGBT, plays an important part in this. Leaders ensure professional learning for all staff that develops their skills, knowledge and confidence to support LGBT learners and assists in creating an inclusive ethos. Frequently, this involves input from specialist external partners, including providing training for specific staff that allows them to deliver professional learning to colleagues within their own organisation.

Where provision is less strong

In these cases, LGBT learners encounter varying levels of bullying and discrimination that impact negatively on their school and college experience leading to poorer attendance and slower academic progress than their peers. Learners in general do not see positive LGBT role models as part of their curriculum or around their school or college. This increases the likelihood that they will develop negative views of LGBT people and that LGBT learners will not appreciate that they can be equally successful as others. Addressing LGBT issues is a bolt-on part of the school or college's provision, for example with teachers addressing them only as part of personal and social education (PSE) sessions. This may reinforce the sense that LGBT people are a special issue that needs discussing rather than part of everyday life. Leaders do not ensure that instances of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are recorded or that trends are identified and acted upon or ensure that staff engage in high quality professional learning that provides them with the confidence to support LGBT learners.

Recommendations

Schools and colleges should:

- Recommendation 1 – schools and colleges should review their curriculum and individual course content to consider how well the teaching of diversity and inclusion, including LGBT issues, is integrated into learning experiences
- Recommendation 2 – schools and colleges should ensure that instances of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are recorded and that trends are identified and acted upon
- Recommendation 3 – schools and colleges should ensure that all staff engage in regular training in addressing discrimination and promoting diversity, including issues around LGBT people.

Local authorities and consortia should:

- Recommendation 4 - LAs and consortia should work with external partners to deliver relevant professional learning opportunities for staff in schools across primary and secondary sectors
- Recommendation 5 – LAs and consortia should work with primary and secondary schools to ensure progression in relationships and sexuality education between sectors.

Education officials will write to local authorities and consortia to draw their attention to the recommendations placed on them and on schools in this report.

Publication details

The report will be published on or after 15 October 2020 and will be available on [Estyn's website](#).

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