

LGBT+ Education In Primary Schools: Discussions with Parents

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Part One: Themes for Discussion

When discussing the topic of LGBT+ inclusion with parents, carers and staff, it may be helpful to consider the below themes as a guide for conversations.

By considering the questions associated with each theme, referring to the provided resource(s) for reference and guidance, and preparing your responses, we hope you will feel considerably more confident navigating conversations and answering any questions that may arise.

Part One of this resource will also serve as an assessment of the positive steps your school has already taken, as well as highlighting any areas that may require further development.

1. Values and Ethos

- What are the values and ethos of the school and how do they support your work on LGBT+ inclusion?
- What is your school's mission statement and how does it embed support for an LGBT+ inclusive school?

You may wish to refer to these resources:

- [Pop'n'Olly LGBT+ Teacher Training](#)

2. Valuing Children's Mental Health

- What do you already do to support the mental wellbeing of children in your school?
- What do you already have in place to specifically support the unique needs of an LGBT+ child?

You may wish to refer to these resources:

- [Understanding the Mental Health Impacts on Young People](#) (Part Three of this resource)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

3. Knowledge and Understanding

- What do children in your school already know about LGBT+ lives?
- What have you already taught about LGBT+ lives?
- What resources do you already use in your school that include LGBT+ lives?
- What LGBT+ representation might children have already experienced outside of school? (e.g. children's TV programmes, films, online, etc)

You may wish to refer to these resources:

- [How to Drop-in LGBT+ References Across the Curriculum](#)
- [Pop'n'Olly YouTube Channel](#)
- [What Does LGBT+ Mean? A Guide for Young People \(And Grown-Ups\)](#)

4. Legal Obligations

- What is the statutory guidance on teaching about LGBT+ in primary school?
- What are the legal obligations of the school with regards to LGBT+ inclusion?

You may wish to refer to these resources:

- [Legal Framework](#) (Part Two of this resource)
- [The RSE Guidance for Schools and The Equality Act Guidance for Schools](#)
- [The Equality Act, 2010, Advice for Schools](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)
- [Guidance from the Church of England on challenging \[HBT\] bullying](#)

5. Support for Parents

- What resources does the school recommend for helping parents talk with their children about LGBT+ lives?
- How does the school make sure that LGBT+ parents feel welcome/included within the school community?
- How does the school support parents who have an LGBT+ child?

You may wish to refer to these resources:

- [Pop'n'Ollly YouTube Channel](#)
- [What Does LGBT+ Mean? A Guide for Young People \(And Grown-Ups\)](#)

6. Overall Vision

- Why is teaching about LGBT+ lives important?

You may wish to refer to these resources:

- [Pop'n'Ollly LGBT+ Teacher Training](#)

We trust that the above themes will empower you to communicate effectively and engage with parents and staff when introducing LGBT+ education into your school. Feel free to adapt these suggestions to suit your specific context and needs.

Part Two: Legal Framework

LGBT+ education in schools aims to acknowledge, appreciate, and safeguard the presence of LGBT+ lives in our society. Numerous children are already acquainted with individuals who identify as LGBT+, having LGBT+ relatives, family members and friends. Additionally, some primary-age children may already recognise their own LGBT+ identity, while others may discover their LGBT+ identity as they grow older. Recognising this diversity is essential, as all children will eventually navigate a society characterised by a rich diversity of individuals, including those who are LGBT+.

This section outlines the current legislation and guidance in Britain for LGBT+ education and includes relevant information regarding the mental health of young LGBT+ people.

LGBT+ pupils are **protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation** by law under [the Equality Act 2010](#).

The Public Sector Equality Duty, set out in the Equality Act 2010, requires that schools and public authorities have due regard to the need to ‘**foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.**’ (*Public Sector Equality Duty, Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010*).

The Teaching Standards (2011, *Updated 2013*), which sets professional standards for all teachers in England, outlines the personal and professional conduct of teachers. These standards state that teachers must treat pupils with ‘**dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect**’ as well as ‘**not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty**’. Importantly these standards also state that teachers must ‘**Ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils’ vulnerability**’.

Guidance for Primary Schools on Teaching About LGBT+ Lives

The **primary statutory guidance** regarding LGBT+ education in primary schools is the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance (2019) ([The RSE Guidance](#)).

The **non-statutory guidance documents** that you may wish to refer to when interpreting the RSE and Equality Act which include:

- [The Equality Act 2010. Advice for Schools](#)
- [Guidance from the Church of England on challenging \[HBT\] bullying](#)

It is important to note that there is a difference between statutory guidance and non-statutory guidance.

- **Statutory guidance** sets out what schools and local authorities **SHOULD** do to comply with the law, and should only be departed from when the school has carefully considered the situation and concluded that there is a very good reason to do so, such as where strict application of the guidance would cause harm or distress to a child.
- **Non-statutory guidance** can be issued by Government or other public bodies to help schools interpret the law and establish 'best practice'. Schools should have due regard to non-statutory guidance and should generally seek to follow it unless they believe it would be inappropriate to do so.

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) may also be helpful in setting out best practice and helping interpret the RSE and Equality Act.

Relevant Sections of Statutory Guidance that Support LGBT+ Inclusive Education at Primary Level

‘The focus in primary school should be on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults.’ (*RSE Guidance, Page 19*).

‘By the end of primary school children should know [...] that others’ families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children’s families are also characterised by love and care.’ (*The RSE Guidance, Page 20*).

‘Schools should ensure that all of their teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content. At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT, they should ensure that this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. Schools are free to determine how they do this, and we expect all pupils to have been taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum.’ (*The RSE Guidance, Page 15*)

Other Sources that Support Primary Level LGBT+ Inclusive Education

- Promoting British Values as part of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development in Schools

The most relevant values included in the [SMSC](#) Guidance that relate to LGBT+ education are the values of 'individual liberty' and 'mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs'.

The guidance states that 'actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviors in school that are contrary to fundamental British values.' (*Promoting British Values as part of SMSC in Schools, 2014. Page 5*).

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The [UNCRC](#) is an international treaty ratified by the UK, alongside all nations worldwide (except the USA) and is a comprehensive statement of children's rights. Relevant articles include:

- Article 2 (Non-discrimination)
- Article 3 (Best Interest of the child)
- Article 8 (Protection and preservation of identity)
- Article 13 (Freedom of expression)
- Article 16 (Right to privacy)
- Article 17 (Access to information)

Draft Non-Statutory Guidance: Gender Questioning Children

Released by the UK Government on 19/12/2023, [Gender Questioning Children](#), is draft non-statutory guidance proposing new advice for schools in relation to transgender and gender diverse pupils. The consultation period for this draft guidance closed on 12/03/24 and a final version has not yet been published. Therefore schools are under no requirement to act on or follow this non-statutory draft guidance. Consequently, schools must prioritise making sure they are compliant with the statutory guidance and legislation (cited above) which are in-force and precede this draft non-statutory guidance.

Draft Review of RSHE Statutory Guidance

Released by the UK Government on 16/05/2024, **The Review of the RSHE Statutory Guidance** is a consultation that seeks feedback on proposed revisions to the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance 2019. The consultation period has now ended. Schools are under no requirement to act on this draft guidance. Consequently, schools must prioritise making sure they are compliant with the statutory guidance and legislation (cited above) which are in-force and precede this draft statutory guidance.

Definition of 'Gender Reassignment' in the Equality Act 2010 - Who is Protected and When?

Gender reassignment is defined in the Equality Act as applying to anyone who 'is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.' (*The Equality Act 2010, Section 7*).

Gender-fluid and non-binary people are protected by the 'gender reassignment' provision of the Equality Act as confirmed by the 2020 case of *Taylor vs Jaguar Land Rover*, 2020. The Equality Act 2010, Code of Practice (Section 2.19) states that '**gender reassignment is a personal process, that is moving away from one's birth sex to the preferred gender, rather than a medical process.**'

This means that from the moment they begin their social transition (for example, asking to be called a different name or starting to use different pronouns), trans people of any age are protected under the 'gender reassignment' characteristic. There is no requirement to have obtained a gender recognition certificate or to have had any medical intervention to be protected under this characteristic.

Conflicts Between Religious or Personal Beliefs and LGBT+ Teaching

It is important to state here that UK Government statutory guidance outlines what should be taught to children as part of the National Curriculum. The curriculum is for all schools whether, faith, independent or faith schools. The RSE Guidance states, as above, that:

‘The focus in primary school should be on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults.’ (*RSE Guidance, Page 54*).

‘By the end of primary school children should know [...] that others’ families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children’s families are also characterized by love and care.’ (*The RSE Guidance, Page 20*).

The Equality Act 2010 protects ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender reassignment’ to the same extent as ‘religion or belief’.

Schools are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, set out in the Equality Act 2010, which means that they must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. (*Public Sector Equality Duty, Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010*). This means that before decisions or policies are made, schools should consider the equality impact of their actions in line with these three aims. Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty for schools is available [here](#).

Ofsted Guidance states that **‘schools can choose to teach the tenets of any faith on the protected characteristics. For example, they may explain that same-sex relationships and gender reassignment are not permitted by a particular religion. However, if they do so, they must also explain the legal rights of LGBT people under UK law, and that this and LGBT people must be respected.’** ([*Inspecting Teaching of the Protected Characteristics in School, August 2023*](#)).

Parent's Right to Withdraw

The RSE Guidance separates 'sex education' and 'relationships education'. Parents have a right to withdraw their primary-age children from sex education, but do not have a right to withdraw their children from relationships education, including when the relationships education covers LGBT+ relationships.

Under the RSE Guidance, schools are under a duty to consult with parents in developing and, where necessary, reviewing their relationships, sex and health education curriculum. Schools must ensure this policy meets the needs of pupils and parents and reflects the community they serve.

'Relationships Education is compulsory in all primary schools. Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools and the content set out in this guidance therefore focuses on Relationships Education.' (*The RSE Guidance, Page 23*).

The RSE Guidance states:

'The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs.' (*The RSE Guidance, Page 20*).

Safeguarding and LGBT+

‘The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm.’
(*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, Page 51*).

The safeguarding principles, outlined in the [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2023\)](#) statutory guidance, makes clear that the best interests of the student are paramount. This principle can also be found in section 1(1) of the Children Act 1989.

Under this statutory guidance, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment,
- preventing the impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development,
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care,
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

‘Children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.’
(*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, Page 51*).

‘Risks can be compounded where children who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.’ (*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, Page 51*).

Informing Parents if a Child ‘Comes Out’ at School

‘The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm.’

(*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, Page 51*). This means that if a child comes out to you, there is no requirement to disclose this information to anyone else.

With regard to informing parents or guardians about a child coming out as LGBT+ at school, it is important to consider the potential impact on the child given that the *Growing Up LGBT+ Report (2021)* shows that 25% of LGBT+ children do not have supportive home environments and ‘are facing daily tension at home’. Telling their parents without the child’s consent, could lead to ‘maltreatment’ and an ‘impairment of children’s mental and physical health’.

Part Three: Understanding the Mental Health Impact on Young People

The following section includes statistics to help understand how LGBT+ education affects the mental health of young people as well as statistics to help understand the homelife of some LGBT+ young people and the views of parents across the UK.

The statistics in this section come from the following resources:

- [Diversity Role Models: Impact Report](#)
- [Just Like Us: Growing Up LGBT+ Report](#)
- [Just Like Us: Positive Futures Report](#)
- [Just Like Us: Parents Views Report](#)
- [YouGov Polling](#)

When introducing LGBT+ education it is important to know that many children will already know people who are LGBT+, may already identify as LGBT+ themselves or may grow up to be LGBT+. All children will grow up to live in a society with a diverse range of people including people who are LGBT+. LGBT+ education is about preparing children for life in modern Britain.

Some statistics that support this are:

‘1 in 4 children ages 8-15 have a friend that identifies as LGBT+. 17% of the same age bracket had a family member who is LGBT+.’ (YouGov, June 2021).

‘63% of 8-15 year olds know someone close to them who is LGBT+.’ (YouGov, June 2021).

The consequences of not positively teaching about LGBT+ lives can have a lasting negative impact on a child or young person's mental health. The following sections include some statistics about the current state of LGBT+ education, LGBT+ bullying rates and future prospects.

LGBT+ Education Statistics & Mental Health Consequences

‘48% of pupils have little to no positive messaging about being LGBT+.’ (*Growing Up LGBT+ Report, 2021*).

‘Less than half (44%) of LGBT+ respondents said their school spoke positively about LGBT+ people.’ (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

‘74% of LGBT+ pupils who have never had positive messaging from their school about being LGBT+ have contemplated suicide.’ (*Growing up LGBT+ Report, 2021*).

‘LGBT+ young people are twice as likely to contemplate suicide, and Black LGBT+ young people are three times more likely.’ (*Growing Up LGBT+, 2021*).

‘LGBT+ young people are more likely to have high levels of anxiety, depression and panic attacks when their school background is unsupportive, 93% compared to 78%.’ (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

‘Schools that are unsupportive create worse future outcomes for all pupils, and LGBT+ pupils in particular.’ (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

LGBT+ Bullying

'A YouGov survey in 2019 found that LGBT+ bullying is the most common form of bullying in UK schools.'
(YouGov, 2019).

'LGBT+ school pupils are twice as likely to have been bullied and 91% have heard negative language about being LGBT+.' (Growing Up LGBT+, 2021).

'42% of LGBT+ school pupils have been bullied in the past year, double the number of non-LGBT+ pupils, 21%.' (Growing Up LGBT+, 2021).

'1 in 5 (18%) LGBT+ pupils didn't tell anyone they'd been bullied and just 21% told a teacher at school.'
(Growing Up LGBT+, 2021).

'LGBT+ pupils who have come out are significantly more likely to be bullied.' (Growing Up LGBT+, 2021).

'Only 33% of LGBT+ pupils say there is a clear process for reporting anti-LGBT+ bullying in their school.'
(Growing Up LGBT+, 2021).

'Secondary school pupils are most likely to be bullied when they are gay or thought to be gay (42%).'
(Diversity Role Models Impact Report, 2022).

'20% Primary school pupils are most likely to be bullied for their differences or thought to be different.'
(Diversity Role Models Impact Report, 2022).

Impact of Positive LGBT+ Education

‘Non-LGBT+ pupils also benefit from LGBT+ inclusion in school – 33% of non-LGBT+ pupils who have never had positive messaging at school have contemplated suicide but this drops to 28% when there is strong positive messaging in their school.’ (*Growing Up LGBT+ Report, 2021*).

‘84% of LGBT+ respondents from supportive schools were optimistic about their futures, some or all of the time, compared with 63% of LGBT+ respondents from unsupportive schools.’ (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

‘Using someone’s correct name and pronouns at school, home, work and with friends results in 71% fewer symptoms of depression.’ (*Growing Up LGBT+, 2021*).

‘There was also a significant increase in non-LGBT+ students feeling more optimistic about their futures. A rise of 10%. This shows that LGBT+ supportive messaging and education in school improved the mental health of all young people.’ (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

Challenges Faced by LGBT+ Youth Beyond School

The following statistics reflect the challenges and disparities faced by LGBT+ young people in comparison to their non-LGBT+ counterparts:

'1 in 4 (25%) LGBT+ young people are facing daily tension at home, compared to 15% of non-LGBT+ young people.' (*Growing Up LGBT+ Report, 2021*).

'LGBT+ young people are half as likely to be 'very close' to their family. 27% compared to 50% of non-LGBT+ young people.' (*Growing Up LGBT+ Report, 2021*).

LGBT+ young adults from unsupportive school and home backgrounds were:

'Four times as likely to feel ashamed of being LGBT+. 41% vs 9%.' (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

'More than twice as likely to have experienced panic attacks, 60% vs 28%, and nearly twice as likely to have experienced depression in the past year, 82% vs 42%.' (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

'More than three times as likely to 'never or rarely' feel optimistic about their future, 42% vs 12%.' (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

'Half as likely to feel good about themselves, 41% vs 89%.' (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

'More than four times as likely to 'rarely or never' feel close to other people, 49% vs 11%.' (*Positive Futures Report, 2023*).

Parental Perspectives on LGBT+ Education

The following statistics shed light on the perceptions and practices of UK parents regarding LGBT+ education and inclusivity:

‘Eight in 10 (82%) of UK parents say it’s ‘important’ for their children to ‘learn that different types of families exist (e.g. LGBT+ families, such as gay parents).’ *(Just Like Us, 2022).*

‘However, only 34% of parents said there is ‘enough support and resources for parents from schools about educating your children around LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans) people.’ *(Just Like Us, 2022).*

‘A third of UK parents have never spoken to their child about what LGBT+ means and 10% never would, the independent survey of 1,001 UK parents found.’ *(Just Like Us, 2022).*

‘The majority of UK families (67%) don’t have any LGBT+ inclusive books at home for their children to read. However, the majority of parents (61%) also said LGBT+ inclusive children’s books, such as those with gay parents in, would be helpful in aiding conversations with their child about LGBT+ topics.’ *(Just Like Us, 2022).*

‘Dads are less likely than mums to have had a conversation with their child about what LGBT+ means. Four in 10 dads (38%) have never spoken to their child about LGBT+ topics, compared to three in 10 mums (28%).’ *(Just Like Us, 2022).*

We hope that you have found this resource useful. If you would like any further support or information please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing info@popnolly.com.

Best wishes,
The Pop’n’Ollly Team