

Guidance on LGBT Inclusive Education



Fairness

Equality

Respect

Inclusion



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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Introduction

The [recommendations](#) from the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group enable the teaching of LGBT matters across the curriculum within the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. They shape the national approach to LGBT inclusive education and support schools to develop respectful and tolerant learners. Within these recommendations is a commitment to:

“develop National Guidance which clearly states expectations regarding LGBT Inclusive Education and signposts teachers in any school in Scotland towards supporting resources”
– Recommendation 7.

The following guidance note is for all local authority-run schools in Scotland and sets out national expectations regarding the implementation of LGBT inclusive education. This guidance replaces the previous guidance issued jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA in May 2019¹.

Additional information, professional learning, and resources to support this guidance note can be accessed on the national platform for LGBT inclusive education: lgbteducation.scot

Background and Context

Educational and Policy Context

LGBT inclusive education has been developed to be implemented and align with Curriculum for Excellence and reflect the educational policy landscape that develops the four capacities for learning; successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, responsible citizens. Implementing LGBT inclusive education contributes to this learning and teaching and also supports schools to fulfil their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as part of the Equality Act 2010. Appropriate consideration of protected characteristics - including sexual orientation and gender reassignment in curriculum development and delivery, and more widely in policies and practices that take account of the needs of LGBT pupils and staff - can help schools to address the PSED (see Appendix 1).

What is LGBT inclusive education?

The central ethos of Scottish education is one of inclusion. Inclusion is the cornerstone to helping us achieve excellence and equity in education for all our children and young people, and help them develop the four capacities: successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

LGBT inclusive education refers to an educational approach of integrating the teaching of LGBT themes into the learning pathway from early level to the Senior Phase, with learning content differentiated to be suitable for the various ages and stages of learning, in order to proactively address prejudice and prejudice-based bullying. Central to this, is ensuring that themes related to the lives, histories, and experiences of LGBT people are included across curriculum areas.

¹ [LGBT inclusive education: guidance to education authorities May 2019 - gov.scot](http://lgbteducation.scot)

Effectively representing LGBT themes within learning and teaching can prevent harmful stereotypes and stigma from arising, which often lead to prejudice or bullying; and allows learners to see themselves and their families reflected throughout their learning pathway.

LGBT inclusive education recognises the value of a whole school approach which includes ensuring educators engage in career long professional learning; addresses and records bullying behaviour; that school and early learning and childcare staff use a children and young people's rights-based approach to supporting all children and young people; and, that schools and local authorities have supportive policies in place to ensure consistent practice.

LGBT inclusive education should be delivered throughout the academic year in regular learning and teaching, as part of Curriculum for Excellence, which supports interdisciplinary learning where appropriate.

Why is LGBT inclusive education being implemented?

Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are continuing issues within education settings, and LGBT learners report feeling excluded from or underrepresented in their learning pathway. Research continues to show LGBT learners experience high rates of bullying and prejudice. This can lead to negative outcomes such as poor wellbeing, absenteeism, ineffective coping mechanisms, and poorer academic attainment.

LGBT inclusive education facilitates a proactive, educational approach within schools to address the stereotypes, social stigma, and inequalities that can often lead to prejudice or prejudice-based bullying experienced by learners who are LGBT, perceived or thought to be LGBT by others, or who have LGBT family members. Additionally, young people may participate in prejudice-based behaviours in a non-targeted manner, such as the normalised use of pejorative language like the phrase "*that's so gay*" or derogatory slurs. In 2018, the Scottish Government accepted 33 recommendations outlined in a report from a variety of education stakeholders on the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group, proposing the adoption of an educational approach to address the homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia often experienced by LGBT young people and their peers. This can be accessed at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/lgbti-inclusive-education-working-group-report/>

Children and young people are likely to engage with topics related to equality, identity, and encounter information about diverse groups of people in society, through social media and the internet where they may encounter harmful content and disinformation. It is important that the curriculum therefore provides children and young people with opportunities to learn about these topics in a safe and factual learning environment.

The LGBT Inclusive Education Framework

All local authority run schools in Scotland are expected to implement LGBT inclusive education through Curriculum for Excellence in alignment with the national approach..

The 2018 report developed a framework which set out the themes related to LGBT people to be included across Scotland's curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence, and teaching and learning within the Four Contexts for Learning:

- Curriculum areas and subjects;
- Interdisciplinary learning;
- Ethos and life of the school; and,

- Opportunities for personal development.

In implementing the recommendations from the report, the Scottish Government and COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) took a joint approach to implementation, agreeing all local authority run schools in Scotland would be expected to implement LGBT inclusive education. Phased implementation of this work began in September 2021 and schools from all local authority areas have started taking this forward in their own setting.

Work on implementing LGBT inclusive education should have already begun. Where this is not already the case, schools should consider their upcoming evaluations and School Improvement Plans for opportunities to include LGBT inclusive education.

The National Approach to LGBT Inclusive Education

LGBT inclusive education should be integrated within teaching and learning through the broad general education to the Senior Phase, with an emphasis on meaningful, factual and contextually relevant learning across curriculum areas and subjects. Learning content should be differentiated for the age and stage of learners. These principles for effective practice are the core of the national approach to LGBT Inclusive Education.

Through consultation and engagement with learners and educators, the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group identified key thematic areas of learning and teaching related to LGBT inclusive education to support integration across curriculum areas and subjects. These thematic areas formed the basis for development work carried out by members of the LGBT Inclusive Education Implementation Group. These themes, set out below, are flexible and complement Curriculum for Excellence by encouraging educators to use their professional judgement as to how and where the Learning Themes are best addressed in learning and teaching, and at what stages.

The seven LGBT Inclusive Education Learning Themes are:

- Understanding the Equality Act 2010, the UNCRC and human rights;
- Identifying prejudice, discrimination, and bullying (including homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia);
- Recognising and challenging gender stereotypes;
- Diverse families, including LGBT parents and siblings;
- Celebrating diversity and difference;
- History of LGBT equality movements; and,
- LGBT past and present figures and role models.

The Learning Themes should be included across the school curriculum, in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Comprehensive inclusion of the seven Learning Themes in learning and teaching across the curriculum is a primary marker of how schools can measure their progress in implementing LGBT inclusive education.

Responding to prejudice-based behaviours

It is imperative all schools effectively respond to prejudice-based behaviours. To help schools to feel confident in this area, there is guidance available in [Addressing Inclusion:](#)

[Effectively Challenging Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia](#). This complements [Respect for All: national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people](#) which was updated in November 2024 and now includes guidance on recording and monitoring bullying incidents in schools.

Schools should communicate their expectations of behaviour and how they will manage any situations which arise, including when incidents are linked to prejudice..

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals with protected characteristics from discrimination, victimisation and harassment and supports progress on equality. Schools and education authorities should ensure that policies aimed at creating inclusive environments, including preventing or responding to bullying or other prejudice-based behaviours, meet these legal obligations. See Appendix 1 for further information.

The way in which a school responds to homophobic, biphobic or transphobic incidents plays an important role in reinforcing a culture where the whole school community understands that such behaviour is unacceptable and helps to prevent further escalation. For example, the normalisation of derogatory and pejorative language use or slurs about a social group, and the perpetuation of harmful social or cultural stereotypes or myths, if unaddressed, can create a culture that can lead to prejudice-based behaviours including bullying.

It is important to note that not all incidents where prejudice-based behaviour occurs will be bullying incidents. The nature of certain behaviour that could be perceived as, or reported as bullying may include behaviour that is criminal in nature, such as a hate crime. Schools should contact Police Scotland if they think a crime has taken place.

Preventing and responding to prejudice-based behaviour will require a line of enquiry that directly addresses the prejudice(s) that has motivated the behaviour. This will include proactively challenging the root causes of different forms of prejudice - such as harmful stereotyping, stigma, negative perceptions, and 'othering' - through the [Four Contexts for Learning](#). Further information can be found in Respect for All.

Recording and monitoring prejudice-based incidents

Consultation with LGBT learners found they often do not feel confident in reporting homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying to their school. They believe adults will not understand what is happening or take it seriously; that sharing their experiences could make them worse; or they are afraid others will find out about their identity.

It is essential that children, young people and family members feel empowered to report allegations of bullying and other prejudice-based behaviours. Their confidence to raise concerns will be informed by a number of factors including their understanding of the process for reporting, the transparency and rigour of the process for investigating allegations and confidence in the actions that will be taken in response.

There should be clear information within a school or organisation's anti-bullying policy of the mechanisms through which allegations of bullying should be reported. Given some children, young people and families may be concerned about the potential for escalation of behaviour if they are found to have reported behaviour, consideration should be given to whether it would be appropriate to have mechanisms for anonymised reporting, alongside other reporting mechanisms.

Schools and organisations should take particular care in the recording of incidents relating to prejudice and structural inequalities. The reporting of 'bullying' can lead to the under-reporting of incidents such as homophobia and biphobia taking place in education. The SEEMiS system enables incidents relating to protected characteristics to be recorded distinct from bullying incidents. This can be selected if the incident was motivated by, or was perceived to be motivated by, homophobia, biphobia or transphobia by any party, including witnesses or school staff.

Support for staff who experience prejudice, discrimination or bullying

All staff are entitled to the protection provided by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which places employers under a duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees at work. This duty includes protecting employees from violent incidents and reducing the risks of such incidents occurring. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers must assess risks to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety by effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review. It is important that individual employees are consulted as part of the risk assessment process and that Trade Union Safety Representatives are consulted on risk assessment processes, procedures and findings.

Local authorities and schools should ensure all staff have access to information about local wellbeing policies and other relevant support services; outline the different ways staff can report an incident; encourage staff to report any issues and support them appropriately if they do; monitor incidents and implement appropriate measures to ensure dignity and safety at work and ensure that all prejudice-based attitudes are always challenged.

The National Platform

To support schools with LGBT Inclusive Education, the Scottish Government launched lgbteducation.scot - a central platform developed in collaboration with educators, which contains information relevant to the national approach to LGBT Inclusive Education. All resources and materials hosted on the platform including those listed below are available free of charge to schools, education settings and early learning and childcare providers.

The platform hosts the [LGBT Inclusive Education Implementation and Evaluation Toolkit](#). This resource has been designed to support schools with all the necessary tools to facilitate effective implementation of LGBT inclusive education.

A [national professional learning course](#) is available to schools, to support staff to gain the knowledge and information they need in this area. Stage 1 is an E-Learning module that can be accessed through lgbteducation.scot at any time. Stage 2 is a face-to-face training input which encourages collegiate staff planning, and is delivered locally. This can be booked upon completion of Stage 1 by staff. All staff in local authority run schools and early learning and childcare providers in Scotland are asked to complete this professional learning course.

[Exemplar teaching and learning materials](#) are also available on the national platform and are updated in cycles. School staff can also access guidance on pastoral care, responding to bullying and prejudice, and information for parents, carers, and families.

Evaluation of LGBT Inclusive Education

The implementation of LGBT inclusive education is evaluated nationally as part of an ongoing process. The evaluation reports, showing positive indicators of the effectiveness of the national approach, can be viewed [here](#).

HM Inspectors will continue to evaluate the extent to which practice in promoting equality and diversity leads to positive outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners. This includes in the context of LGBT inclusive education within Scottish schools. This may be carried out as part of a standard inspection or as a thematic inspection.

As with all other areas of learning and teaching, ongoing curriculum review should regularly take place in schools to ensure learning and teaching remains meaningful, relevant and impactful. Schools can evaluate their implementation of LGBT inclusive education and its continuing impact through the processes through the self evaluation framework and in developing School Improvement Plans. To consider initial implementation of LGBT inclusive education complete, schools should be able to refer to where the seven LGBT Inclusive Education Learning Themes are present throughout their school curriculum.

Further Information

Child Protection

When delivering LGBT inclusive education, some of the learning and teaching content may lead to individual learners wishing to discuss particular issues or experiences with staff.

For example, if learners are engaging with lessons about prejudice or bullying, this may provide them with the confidence to disclose their own experiences.

Using a Getting It Right For Every Child approach to supporting wellbeing, it is important for all staff to be aware of how to handle this in a supportive and safe manner. Staff should be aware of standard safeguarding procedures, how to manage disclosures, and how to appropriately signpost for further support. This should be included in your school's Child Protection Policy. The [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#) provides information as to how to proceed if there is a risk of harm to a child or young person.

All children and young people have a right to privacy. Young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender can often worry about people disclosing information about their identity to others. Staff should be aware of the potential consequences for a young person if their identity is shared without their consent and not in accordance with data protection law. However, there may be times when this is necessary in order to protect them, for example if a young person is taking part in an unsafe relationship or their safety is at risk because of who they are.

In such circumstances, staff have a duty of care to act on their concerns. Learners should be informed and, where possible, involved in any decision making affecting them. They should understand what is happening and why. It is important to ensure the young person involved is fully supported.

Additional information in this area is included in Part 4 of the [Stage 1 E-Learning](#) module.

LGBT Inclusive Education and withdrawal

[Guidance on the teaching of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood \(RSHP\)](#) education makes clear that parents and carers may have the option to withdraw their child(ren) from all or part of a planned sexual health education programme as part of RSHP. This is usually considered when a parent or carer has had the opportunity to consider the topics which will be considered as part of [the curriculum](#). There are no similar terms on which withdrawal can be requested from LGBT Inclusive Education learning.

Where LGBT-related content or themes arise as part of the curriculum in the delivery of broader Experiences and Outcomes (for example, a text which includes a gay character during planned learning in Literacy or learning about rights movements in Social Studies), it would not be possible for a withdrawal request to be granted. This is because it does not relate to a sexual health education programme as part of RSHP. Learning related to LGBT inclusive education is part of the broader curriculum and will be included across curriculum areas.

Resources and information regarding learning content and outcomes can be shared with parents and carers. This can support an understanding of the purpose of LGBT inclusive education and the school's approach to it – which should be connected to school values and form part of a broader ethos of providing an inclusive education about all of the protected characteristics.

[Parentclub](#) provides a range of information for parents and carers about LGBT and Gender Identity, including sources of support, advice and information.

Signposting and Support

Support is available for schools to implement LGBT inclusive education effectively. Signposting to relevant national organisations, and a range of guidance can be found at [National Guidance and Signposting – LGBT Inclusive Education | National Platform \(lgbteducation.scot\)](https://www.lgbteducation.scot.gov.uk/national-guidance-and-signposting).

Appendix 1: Statutory duties and associated guidance and sources of advice and information for parents and carers

Statutory Duties

[The Equality Act 2010](#): The Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') protects people from discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation – known in the Act as 'protected characteristics'.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect and can arise both without any intention to discriminate and when people are all treated the same. Protection against direct discrimination also extends to people who are perceived to have a protected characteristic, for example: where someone who isn't gay is discriminated against by another person because that person thought that they were gay. In addition, protection against direct discrimination extends to people who are discriminated against because of their association with someone who does have a protected characteristic – for example: a parent, family member, or carer.

The Act introduced [The Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) which applies to public bodies, including schools in Scotland managed by education authorities or grant-aided schools.

The PSED require bodies responsible for schools are to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct,
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not,
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Appropriate consideration of protected characteristics - including sexual orientation and gender reassignment in curriculum development and delivery, and more widely in policies and practices that take account of the needs of LGBT pupils and staff - can help schools to address the PSED. For example, in anti-bullying policies that recognise and deal effectively with prejudice-based bullying.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published [Technical Guidance for Schools in Scotland](#) – an authoritative, comprehensive and technical guide to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the provision of education and access to benefits, facilities or services, both educational and non-educational.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

[The Act](#) incorporates into Scots law the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (“the Convention”), an international human rights treaty covering all aspects of children’s lives including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The Act provides for rights and obligations derived from the Convention, and its first 2 optional protocols, to be given effect in Scots law in the following ways:

- it places public authorities under a duty not to act incompatibly with the UNCRC requirements as defined in section 1, and provides legal remedies should they fail to do so (Part 2);
- it places public authorities, when exercising certain functions, under duties to publicly account for their compliance with, and efforts to go beyond, the UNCRC requirements – in particular it places the Scottish Ministers under a duty to produce, and periodically report against, a scheme setting out what they are doing to comply with their duty in relation to the UNCRC requirements and places a duty on certain other public authorities to produce periodic reports on their compliance with those requirements (Part 3);
- it requires statements to be made, when certain types of legislation are brought forward, about the legislation’s compatibility with the UNCRC requirements (Part 4, section 23);
- it requires that legislative words (whenever enacted) originating from the Scottish Parliament be read wherever possible in a way that is compatible with the UNCRC requirements and, where a compatible reading is not possible, it allows the courts to either (depending on when the incompatible words were enacted) strike the words down or make a declaration of their incompatibility (Part 4, sections 24 to 26);
- it sets up procedures for the courts to address questions about the compatibility of legislative words or public bodies’ actions with the UNCRC requirements (Part 5);
- it enables the Scottish Ministers to change the law, by regulations, to cure incompatibilities (or potential incompatibilities) with the UNCRC requirements (Part 6).

Relevant guidance

[General Teaching Council for Scotland \(GTCS\) Standards for Registration](#): The Professional Standards 2021 include a section called “Being A Teacher in Scotland” which places an emphasis on the professional values of social justice, trust and respect, and integrity as being at the heart of what it means to be a teacher in Scotland. These values are integral to, and demonstrated through, your professional relationships and practice. Your practice should also create a safe, caring and purposeful learning environment which is welcoming and inclusive, well managed and well organised.

[Respect for All](#) is the national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland’s children and young people. Updated in 2024, It includes an explicit commitment to addressing

prejudice-based bullying, which includes homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying behaviours.

[How Good Is Our School?](#): Meeting the needs of all learners, and ensuring that all learners are reflected in their education, sits across all of the Quality Indicators in How Good Is Our School? 4 from Leadership and Management, through Learning Provisions, to Successes and Achievements. Specifically, Quality Indicator 3.1 'Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality, and Inclusion' asks schools "To what extent does our school celebrate diversity?" And "How well does our school ensure that the curriculum is designed to develop and promote equality and diversity, eliminate discrimination?"

As such, embedding LGBT inclusive education within the school setting from leadership and senior management level to the classroom, with a representative curriculum designed to develop and promote equality and diversity, will in turn strengthen inclusion and equality outcomes within the school community.

Information for parents and carers

[Lgbteducation.scot](#): The national platform provides links to guidance from trade unions, LGBT organisations, and national parent and carer groups

[Parentclub](#) provides a range of information for parents and carers about LGBT and Gender Identity, including sources of support, advice and information.



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