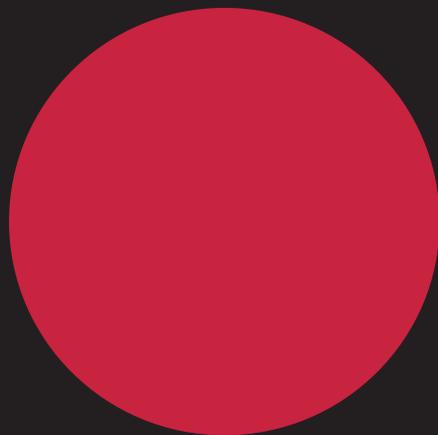
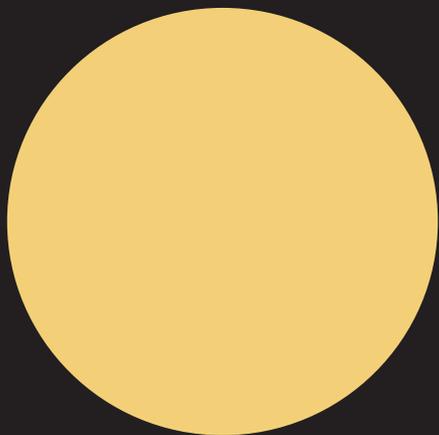
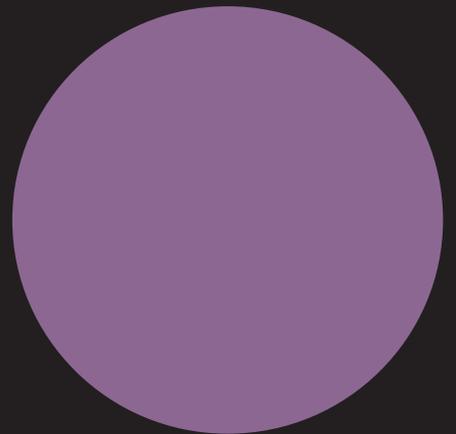
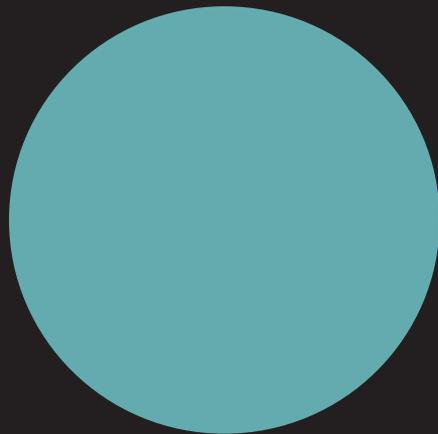
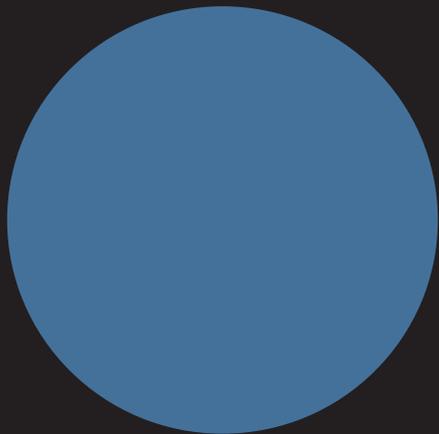


THE SCHOOL REPORT

The experiences of gay young people in Wales' schools in 2012





Foreword

Andrew White
Director **Stonewall Cymru**

A decade has now passed since the Welsh Government's guidance, *Sex and Relationships Education in Schools (2002)* which clearly stated that Section 28 did not prevent 'objective discussions of homosexuality' in the classroom. This effectively repealed Section 28 in the then newly devolved Welsh education system. The legacy of this legislation, however, has loomed large over our schools. Many teachers were left unsure whether they were even allowed to tackle homophobic bullying, and lacking in the confidence and skills to do so. Stonewall's groundbreaking 2007 study revealed the full extent of the damage caused; two thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people reported experiencing homophobic bullying at school and only a quarter of schools were saying that such bullying was wrong.

In response, and with the vital support of the Monument Trust and Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Stonewall produced a range of pioneering, high quality and age appropriate resources for local authorities, schools and teachers. During the past decade Stonewall Cymru have worked with key education agencies and directly with schools and colleges around Wales, to ensure that for the first time teachers have the support they need to teach positively about sexual orientation, as well as to prevent and tackle homophobic bullying.

The School Report 2012, a survey of more than 1,600 gay young people in Britain shows some encouraging results. Levels of homophobic bullying have fallen by 10% since

2007 and the number of schools saying that homophobic bullying is wrong has more than doubled. This research also provides clear evidence that in those schools that are taking simple steps to tackle homophobia, pupils are less likely to have been bullied and much more likely to feel happy and welcome in their schools.

The study shows that there is still much more to be done. More than half of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in Britain still experience homophobic bullying and its damaging impact is just as pronounced. Two in five gay pupils who experience bullying attempt or think about taking their own life as a direct consequence. Three in five bullied gay young people say that it is affecting their studies and seven in ten of all lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils admit to skipping school at some point. Only one in four gay pupils say a teacher has spoken with them about how homophobic bullying is wrong.

If we truly aspire to a Wales where every single child can reach their full potential, tackling homophobic bullying is key. All of the key players from the Department for Education and Skills, Estyn and teacher training providers to individual schools and boards of governors must keep sight of their own role in creating and facilitating learning environments where this can happen. This was our vision when Stonewall Cymru was established a decade ago; it remains our top priority today.

Findings

PREVALENCE OF HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

More than half (55 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people experience homophobic bullying in Britain's schools.

I was head-butted in the corridor and punched in the park. Iwan, 15, secondary school

I got bullied a lot around the time I came out. The teachers didn't do anything even when they did overhear the snide comments and gossip that was going round about me. Meleri, 14, secondary school

Almost all (99 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school.

RESPONSES TO HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

Only half of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils report that their schools say homophobic bullying is wrong. **Less than a third** (31 per cent) say their school responds quickly to homophobic bullying when it occurs.

I was bullied for a year by a boy in my class. The teachers never told him off for touching me and calling me rude names until I pointed it out three times to my head of year. Gavin, 16, secondary school

Only ten per cent of gay pupils report that teachers challenge homophobic language every time they hear it. **More than half** of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils say other pupils never challenge homophobic language when they hear it.

Almost three in five gay pupils who are bullied say other students who witness homophobic bullying never intervene.

Teachers just ignore it from what I've seen. Almost every single person in the school says 'gay' in a negative way. When I hear someone say things like 'that's so gay' I tell them off and try to make them see that it's wrong and homophobic.

Bethan, 14, secondary school

One in four (26 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils say a teacher has spoken with them about how homophobic bullying is wrong. One in twelve (eight per cent) have heard messages about homophobic bullying from their head teachers. Just **three per cent** say their parents are sent information on this.

My teacher said that he thought George Michael had HIV because 'he was gay' [George Michael has never said he has HIV]. Another girl and I challenged him explaining that anyone can get HIV. The sad thing was he is a biology teacher so he should know how people get HIV.

CARYS, 16, secondary school (Wales)

I was always too uncomfortable with my own sexuality to report any bullying.

OWEN, 17, secondary school (Wales)

TEACHING AND SUPPORT

Only one in three (34 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who are taught about or discuss gay issues in school say this is done in a way they find is positive overall.

More than four in five (85 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are never taught in school about biological or physical aspects of same-sex relationships.

Four in five (81 per cent) are never taught about where to go for help and advice about same-sex relationships.

The school never addresses it. They act as if there is no such thing. Dylan, 15, secondary school

Just one in three (33 per cent) gay young people discuss lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons. Just one in five (22 per cent) discuss gay people or their relationships in sex and relationship education.

Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of gay young people use the internet to meet other lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

CONSEQUENCES FOR GAY PUPILS

Fewer than half (46 per cent) of gay young people feel there is an adult at school they could talk to about being gay.

One in five (21 per cent) gay pupils do not feel safe at school. Pupils who experience homophobic bullying are three times more likely than those who aren't bullied to say they don't feel safe at school.

It's hard to find an adult you can trust with the truth and how you really feel. Sian, 14, secondary school

In contrast pupils who are taught positively about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are much more likely to feel part of their school community (87 per cent compared to 55 per cent) and to feel that their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome' (94 per cent compared to 64 per cent).

Three in five gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that this impacts on their school work. One in six (16 per cent) say it's had a big effect on their school work.

I missed a lot of school due to bullying. I was out of school for most of Year 11. Rhys, 17, secondary school

Two in five (41 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying say they deliberately harm themselves directly because of the bullying, which is consistent with other research that links experience of bullying with increased risk of self-harm.

Recommendations: Schools

1 GO BACK TO BASICS

Homophobic bullying of gay pupils is lower in schools that explicitly state that homophobic bullying is wrong. In schools where homophobic remarks are rarely or never heard, there are nearly half as many incidents of homophobic bullying.

- **Schools should have clear and promoted policies on tackling homophobic bullying, which takes place in the classroom, the corridor and beyond the school gates. All instances of homophobic language should be challenged and pupils made to understand why using it is wrong.**

3 LEAD FROM THE TOP

Fewer than one in ten gay pupils have had messages about homophobic bullying from their head teachers. Seventeen per cent of gay pupils report that teachers and other school staff make homophobic comments.

- **Head teachers, governors, and other school leaders should make sure tackling homophobic bullying is the responsibility of the entire school community. As a priority, school leaders should make sure homophobic language is not used by members of staff.**

2 DEAL WITH INCIDENTS SWIFTLY AND CLEARLY

Less than a third of gay pupils say their school responds quickly to homophobic bullying when it occurs. When young people tell someone about the bullying, in almost two thirds of cases nothing is done to stop it.

- **Every incident of homophobic bullying should be taken seriously and quickly acted upon, with clear and consistent sanctions for those responsible. Persistent bullying should be referred up the school hierarchy – involving senior management and parents as necessary.**

4 REMEMBER THE BIGGER PICTURE

Three in five gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that this impacts on their school work. One in three gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying change their plans for future education because of it.

- **Schools should see tackling homophobic bullying as part of their wider drive to improve behaviour and boost aspiration, standards and attainment.**

5 EQUIP YOUR STAFF

Three in five lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that teachers who witness the bullying never intervene. Only ten per cent of gay pupils report that teachers challenge homophobic language every time they hear it.

- **Schools should make sure teachers are trained on how to combat homophobic bullying and to support lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. This should also be part of continuing professional development (CPD) – schools should make sure external CPD providers are equipped to train staff on combatting homophobic bullying. Schools should look to and learn from schools that are already tackling homophobic bullying successfully.**

7 ENCOURAGE ROLE MODELS

More than half of gay young people don't feel there is an adult at school who they can talk to about being gay and almost two in five who experience homophobic bullying never tell anyone about it – often because they feel ashamed.

- **Teachers and school staff who visibly challenge homophobic bullying and language and who positively address gay issues will make young people confident to approach adults at school. Schools should also support gay staff who want to be open about their sexual orientation.**

9 PROVIDE SUPPORT

Two in five lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying attempt or think about taking their own life directly because of the bullying.

- **School nurses should make clear that young people can speak to them in confidence about their sexual orientation. They should be trained to support the specific needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people and be aware of the particular mental health issues which they may face.**

6 INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE

Almost three in five gay pupils who are bullied say other students who witness homophobic bullying never intervene. More than half of gay pupils say other pupils never challenge homophobic language when they hear it.

- **Schools should actively involve young people in the design of anti-bullying policies and encourage them to take ownership of anti-bullying initiatives to create an environment in which young people themselves reject and challenge homophobic bullying.**

8 BROADEN THE CURRICULUM

More than half of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are never taught anything about gay issues in their lessons. More than four in five are never taught in school about biological or physical aspects of same-sex relationships.

- **Schools should integrate sexual orientation issues across their teaching. Schools should also provide gay young people with information and support to help them stay healthy and safe.**

10 GO BEYOND TACKLING BULLYING

Pupils who are taught positively about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are much more likely to feel part of their school community and to feel that their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome'.

- **Good schools do much more than just tackle homophobic bullying. They create a school environment in which difference and diversity are promoted and celebrated across whole school community.**

Recommendations: Key partners

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS:

- Continue to make tackling homophobic bullying a key priority and communicate this priority to schools through clear guidance. This should include sample policies, advice on monitoring and recording incidents and good practice case studies.
- Encourage primary schools to discuss 'different families' as part of their teaching, enabling pupils to gain age appropriate awareness of the diversity of family life before entering secondary school.
- Make sure that high quality training on combatting homophobic bullying and supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people is part of all teachers' initial training.
- Create opportunities for school leaders to share their experiences and take lessons from each other on tackling homophobic bullying in their schools.

ESTYN:

- Continue to make sure that a school's effectiveness in combatting homophobic bullying and creating a safe learning environment for all young people is considered as part of the inspection framework.
- Highlight good practice and areas for improvement in this area in order to give schools goals for the future and allow them to learn from the success of others.
- Make sure that all inspectors are trained on sexual orientation issues and on how to measure a school's effectiveness in combatting homophobic bullying.
- When inspecting initial teacher training providers make sure they are delivering training which prepares new teachers to combat homophobic bullying.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES:

- Make sure that all of their schools are explicitly aware of the importance of tackling homophobic language and bullying.
- Facilitate opportunities for schools to support one another in this area and identify good practice primary and secondary schools which can share their expertise.
- Provide guidance to their schools on recording and monitoring incidents of homophobic bullying and measure progress on an authority or organisation wide level.
- Develop links with those public and private sector services which can support their schools in combatting homophobic bullying.
- Link up with lesbian, gay and bisexual groups and youth groups that provide support for schools and individuals on how to tackle bullying.
- Make sure that their schools have access to support, training and advice in dealing with homophobic bullying and supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people.

Resources and Support



Stonewall Cymru's **School Champions programme** provides tailored support and guidance to individual primary and secondary schools, helping them to develop strategies to challenge homophobic bullying behaviour and celebrate difference. Schools which are part of the programme work with Stonewall Cymru and each other to address homophobic behaviour and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment for all children and young people.

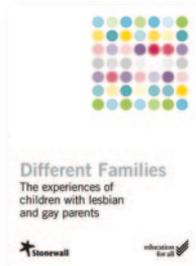
For more information visit www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/schoolchampions or email education@stonewallcymru.org.uk



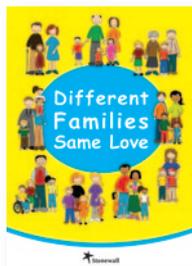
Our **Education Champions** programme provides tailored support to local authorities in their work to prevent and tackle homophobic bullying in their schools. Through this programme, local authorities work with Stonewall Cymru and each other to establish ways in which they can address homophobic bullying and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment for all young people.

For more information www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/educationchampions or email education@stonewallcymru.org.uk

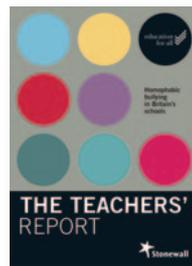
Stonewall Cymru also has a wide range of resources available to schools which can help address homophobic bullying and support lesbian, gay and bisexual young people and help to tackle many of the issues outlined in here



Different Families: the experiences of children with gay parents (2010)



Different Families posters and stickers help schools to celebrate difference



The Teachers' Report (2009) YouGov polling of over 2,000 primary and secondary school staff about homophobic bullying



'Oh no! Not the gay thing!' – a pack with ideas on how to address lesbian, gay and bisexual issues through the curriculum



Celebrating difference: Challenging homophobia in primary schools (2011) 28 minute primary school staff training DVD

Spell It Out – our secondary school staff training DVD



FIT – Stonewall's feature-film for secondary schools



Role Models – A collection of 17 personal stories from successful and inspiring lesbian, gay and bisexual role models leading in a range of industries



Some People Are Gay. Get Over It! posters, postcards and stickers



Education Guides – including *Challenging homophobic language*; *Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people*; *Including different families*; *Working with faith communities* and *Effective school leadership*

For more information or to order any of these resources visit www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/atschool

THE STUDY Stonewall commissioned the Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge to conduct a survey with young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (or think they might be) on their experiences in secondary schools and colleges across Britain. Between November 2011 and

February 2012, 1,614 lesbian, gay and bisexual young people completed an online survey. Please visit www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/atschool to see the full report *The School Report: The experiences of gay young people in Britain's schools in 2012*