

# A. ADVICE FOR GOVERNORS

# A1: Introductions

## A1.1 The purpose of this guidance

This section provides information for governors about their roles and responsibilities in relation to homophobic bullying.

## A1.2 Why should governors address homophobic bullying?

Refer to **DL2** with this section

Governors have a legal duty to ensure **all** forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying, are dealt with in schools under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. For more on overall duties to promote the welfare of pupils and to safeguard them see *Safe to Learn*<sup>1</sup> and *Safeguarding Children in Education*<sup>2</sup>.

Bullying can cause lasting damage to the self-esteem, happiness and well-being of the children and young people that encounter it. Homophobic bullying can be particularly difficult for the young people affected by it and the DCSF is aware that schools find it a challenging area to address. In fact 34% of all communications received by the EACH helpline are from members of school staff seeking guidance on how best to deal with the homophobic bullying of pupils (EACH, 2007, sample 3361).

## Research

Research by Stonewall<sup>3</sup> indicates that young people who experience homophobic bullying are more likely to leave school at 16, sometimes despite being keen to continue their studies. Bullying can also be linked to poor attendance with one survey showing that 72% of LGB adults reported a regular history of absenteeism at school (Rivers, 2000).

As a result, homophobic bullying can negatively affect a young person's attainment and future life chances, and in the most severe cases can lead to young people self-harming and contemplating suicide. A survey by Rivers in 2000 showed that 53% of adult lesbians and gay men who had been bullied at school reported contemplating self-harm as a result, while 40% had gone on to harm themselves. A further study showed that more than 20% had attempted suicide (Mullen, 1999).

A school where any bullying is tolerated creates an unsafe learning and teaching environment for all. Therefore governors have explicit responsibility to ensure that schools respond to and prevent homophobic bullying.

<sup>1</sup> [www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/safetolearn/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/safetolearn/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/familyandcommunity/childprotection/guidance/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/familyandcommunity/childprotection/guidance/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.stonewall.org.uk/schoolreport](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/schoolreport)