A. ADVICE FOR GOVERNORS

A5: Responding

A5.1 Responding to homophobic incidents

Governors have a role in supporting **heads** [10] in developing systems and processes to ensure that a range of **interventions**, **sanctions** and systems are in place to respond to homophobic bullying if it occurs.

The first stage in the process of preventing homophobic bullying is to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-bullying measures already in place and consider how these can be applied to homophobic bullying. The **Education and Inspections Act 2006** requires governors to develop a statement of behaviour principles. This statement helps the head develop **policies** to respond to incidents of bullying. Although governors are unlikely to be involved in responding directly to incidents, they still have a role in helping heads develop effective policies.

A **'hierarchy of sanctions'** helps staff respond effectively to bullying. Governors can help shape those sanctions. Governors may want to consider these questions when advising on a hierarchy of sanctions:

1. How can interventions be designed so that minor and perhaps unintended instances of homophobic bullying can be addressed? For example, what sanctions should apply to a pupil using **homophobic language** such as "That's so gay"?

2. How can interventions be used when **homophobic language** is used against an individual? For example, "Pass me the calculator you dyke"?

3. How can interventions be used if a young person is not lesbian, gay or bisexual but is experiencing homophobic bullying?

4. How might interventions be used for a young person who has **gay parents** or family members and is experiencing homophobic bullying as a consequence?

5. How can interventions **escalate** when an individual is experiencing continual homophobic bullying?

6. How can the strategy apply to **group bullying** against an individual?

7. How might the school keep **parents/carers** informed about incidents if the young person is lesbian, gay or bisexual and does not want their parents to find out?

8. When will **multiple agencies** [see A4.5] be involved in incidents?

9. How can schools consider incidents that occur **outside** school (including cyberbullying) when developing escalation strategies?

For more on determining the use of sanctions see *Safe to Learn.*