

DL12: How to talk to pupils about homophobic language

A pupil makes a homophobic remark such as "That's so gay" or "Oi, pass me a pen you dyke". Does the school have an explicit policy stating homophobic language is unacceptable? Parents/carers are less likely to be resistant to strategies to prevent homophobic bullying if they've been involved in plans.



Staff cannot intervene effectively and respond to homophobic language if it is not part of policies and procedures.



Tell the pupil that homophobic language is not acceptable in school. Explain that homophobic language is offensive and a form of bullying. Does the pupil understand?



There may be some lapses, and you may have to say it again, but pupils begin to understand that homophobic language is unacceptable and it stops.



The pupil continues to make comments, as does the rest of the class. Explain in more detail the effect that homophobic bullying has on people. Does it stop?



The culture of a school is changing. In the same way pupils understand racism is unacceptable, they begin to understand that homophobic bullying and language is unacceptable.



Remove the pupil from the classroom and talk to them in more detail about the effects of homophobic bullying. Outline that homophobic language is a form of bullying. Does the pupil understand?



Pupils need to understand that homophobic bullying is a form of discrimination and is taken seriously by the school. Pupils who understand this should stop using homophobic language. Pupils who experience homophobic bullying will be more confident about discussing other incidents with you if the school is seen to tackle incidents.



Involve senior managers. The pupil should understand the sanctions that will apply if they continue to use homophobic language. Does this help?



It takes time to teach young people that homophobic bullying is unacceptable, especially if it has not been challenged in the past.



Continued over



Invite parents in to discuss the attitude of the pupil. Even if parents, and pupils, think gay people should be treated differently, this does not mean homophobic bullying and language is acceptable. Pupils cannot be expected to learn by themselves that homophobic bullying is unacceptable. They need to be told.



**Parents
respond
negatively**

Take time to explain to parents why this policy is important as part of the anti-bullying policy of the school. Explain that all pupils should be able to feel safe at school. Reiterate that they have an obligation to help schools uphold policies.