

DL13: Promoting positive messages about different families

Schools can find ways of discussing different families in age appropriate ways; this teaches pupils about respecting others who are not like themselves, which in turn discourages them from bullying. Young people, who are experiencing homophobic bullying because they have gay parents or family members, will feel better about telling a teacher if they know the school welcomes and respects their family. The following are some ideas for discussing families in class.

Age group	Lesson ideas	Other responses and strategies
4-7	<p>Families are different</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is in our family? Ask pupils to draw pictures of their family. Talk about the differences between families – why are families different? How are they different? What other sorts of families are there? Ask the class to draw imaginary families and display them. <p>Relevant learning points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families can be different but they all do the same sort of thing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If pupils tease other pupils for having gay parents, they should understand that this is a form of bullying and is not fair or nice. This should fit within a general anti-bullying strategy. Pupils need to understand that everyone is different. Supporting pupils will be easier if teachers and support staff know their circumstances. Make sure literature encourages lesbian and gay parents to feel included. They are more likely to tell you they are gay if they know you won't treat them, or their child, differently. Take care to be inclusive of all pupils in general activities.
8-11	<p>TV Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do families look like on television? Are they like our families? How are they different? Do they act like your family? What sort of families don't appear on television? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers should make an effort to find opportunities to introduce the idea of different families, including families with gay parents. This will discourage homophobic bullying.

Age group	Lesson ideas	Other responses and strategies
8-11 continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why don't they appear on television? This is an opportunity to talk about gay families and why they might not appear on television. • What views do other groups have about families? <p>Relevant learning points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The media does not always reflect what society really looks like. • The media has an impact on how we see the world. • Sometimes the media may exclude people, including gay people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If pupils bully other pupils for having gay parents, they should be told clearly that this is a form of bullying and is covered by the anti-bullying policy. This should involve a general discussion about bullying including the way it affects a school and individual pupils. • Schools should be aware that when pupils enter secondary school, they are likely to come into contact with more pupils, some of whom are likely to have gay parents or family members. Discussing different families is a key aspect of transition to secondary school.
11-14	<p>Making families work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needs to be in place to make a family work well? Pupils can be guided to talk about respect and listening to each other, the need to understand each other. • Why do things not always work so well? Where do areas of conflict arise? Pupils can talk about incidents where things go wrong. • What strategies can pupils introduce to make families work more effectively? What can they do? What should other members of the family do? • What role do older members of the family play, such as grandparents? What about siblings? • What might parents/carers be concerned about? <p style="text-align: right;">Continued over</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gay parents/carers of pupils entering secondary school should feel able to tell the school about this and should expect to be treated the same as heterosexual parents. Schools should indicate in literature that this will be the case. • Pupils who bully pupils for having gay parents should be told clearly that this is a form of homophobic bullying and will not be tolerated in the school. Sanctions should apply to pupils who continue to bully pupils in this way. • Schools should make efforts to talk inclusively about same-sex parents, for example, avoid assuming all pupils will have a "mum and dad". When schools discuss marriage, they may also discuss civil partnership and adoption rights for gay people.

DL13 continued		
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11-14 continued	<p>Learning points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families work for lots of reasons – not just because they have a mum and a dad. Same sex parents can make good families. Families look very different, but things that go wrong can go wrong for similar reasons. What role do pupils play in making families work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools should ensure that all families feel able to be involved in school events, such as parent teacher associations and are welcome to apply to become governors. This will contribute to a more diverse school culture.
14+	<p>Who do we love? Prejudice against difference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does society say about relationships? What constitutes a “good relationship”? What do different religions say about relationships? Research religious views of marriage, divorce, infidelity, same sex relationships. What sorts of relationships exist in reality? What is the impact of change in a family? How can that make people feel? How can pupils experience bullying after divorce, separation or bereavement? What coping mechanisms might they adopt? <p>Learning points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Society has certain views about relationships. In reality people form relationships for lots of reasons. When is it acceptable to judge other relationships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils should understand that same-sex families exist in wider society and they are likely to encounter them in a place of work. Treating a person differently in the work place because of their sexual orientation is against the law. Schools should be aware that sometimes parents form same-sex relationships, even if they have previously been married to someone of the opposite sex. Acknowledging same sex parenting arrangements exist, and that they are not inferior, will help the pupil cope with the regular issue of family change more readily. It will also make them more likely to report incidents of homophobic bullying.