

## DL17: Responding to verbal incidents in secondary school

Pupils in secondary school are likely to understand that gay people exist, and therefore their comments will be made in this context.

Laura has been experiencing homophobic bullying for some time. A group of girls have been spreading rumours about her and excluding her and calling her names. Laura has told you what is going on, and you have organised a meeting with the girls involved. Laura has chosen not to be there. This script should be used with the school's behaviour policy in mind and alongside wider guidance on bullying and behaviour.

Questions to be asked by the teacher	Points to consider
Teacher: I understand that something has been going on between you and Laura? Can you tell me what has happened?	Will they recognise that they have been bullying Laura? Will they understand that they have been homophobic?
Girls: She's a lezza miss. She keeps looking at us funny, she fancies us. It's weird.	This is a common excuse for homophobic bullying and can distract from the main issue.
Teacher: Can you tell me how you've been treating Laura?	It is important that you neither confirm nor deny that Laura is gay. It's not relevant to this conversation; what is important is that they are treating Laura differently because they think she is gay.
Girls: We don't want to hang out with her, or get changed in front of her.	They are acknowledging that they are excluding her.
Teacher: Anything else?	It is important that they understand what has happened.
Girls: Well, we call her names and stuff but she deserves it.	And admit what has happened.
Teacher: And are you all involved?	What part does each of them take in the bullying?

Questions to be asked by the teacher	Points to consider
Girls: Well yeah, none of us want to be friends with a dyke.	
Teacher: What effect do you think this is having on Laura?	The girls should think about the effect that their behaviour is having on Laura.
Teacher: Do you think Laura wants to be treated differently?	The girls need to consider their behaviour in the context of prejudice.
Teacher: Do you realise that what you are doing is a form of bullying?	The girls may not understand that their behaviour constitutes bullying.
Teacher: Do you understand what sanctions are in place for people who bully? This school will not tolerate homophobic bullying under any circumstances.	The girls must link the fact that they are being homophobic with the fact that this is a form of bullying, and that the hierarchy of sanctions will apply.
Teacher: Ok, how are we going to make this situation better?	Give the girls an opportunity to consider how they can change their behaviour.
Teacher: I think it would be a good idea to have another meeting with Laura where we can talk about this further and you can start by apologising.	It is important to ensure that the girls understand that their behaviour will not be tolerated again and they must make amends.
Teacher: If this behaviour continues, more serious steps will be taken – this might mean a meeting with the Head teacher.	It is essential that Laura can continue to discuss incidents with you, and the girls know you are monitoring their behaviour.