

DL1: What does homophobic bullying look like?

Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

Who experiences homophobic bullying?

- Young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- Young people who are different in some way – they may not act like the other boys or girls.
- Young people who have gay friends, or family, or their parents are gay.
- Teachers and school staff, who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Who does the bullying and why?

- Anyone. Especially if they have not been told it's wrong.
- People who think that lesbian and gay people should be bullied, because they believe gay people are "wrong".
- People who might be gay themselves, and are angry about that.
- People who think "boys should act like boys" and "girls should act like girls".
- People who think gay people shouldn't have the same rights as heterosexual people.
- People who may have been bullied themselves or have low self-esteem and poor communication skills.
- They think gay parenting is wrong and pupils should be treated differently because of it.

What does homophobic bullying look like?

- Verbal abuse – including spreading rumours that someone is gay, suggesting that something or someone is inferior and so they are "gay" – for example, "you're such a gay boy!" or "those trainers are so gay!"
- Physical abuse – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault, and threatening behaviour.
- Cyberbullying – using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. Can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

Can it happen in Primary schools?

- Yes. Pupils may not know what the words mean, but can use homophobic language against others as a form of bullying.
- Or, they may bully a pupil who has gay parents or family members.

Do we have to do anything specific to tackle it?

- You can do, but you can also use your existing methods for tackling bullying and make sure homophobic bullying is included.
- If a young person is not explicitly told that homophobic bullying is wrong, they may think that it is ok to bully someone in this way. Saying clearly that homophobic bullying is wrong makes a difference to pupils' experience. In Stonewall's School Report, 73% of the young people who responded were bullied in schools that made no reference to homophobic bullying. Where schools did make reference to homophobic bullying, 53% of pupils experienced bullying.