DL20: Ideas about how to discuss homophobic bullying in secondary school

Idea	Notes to consider
During **tutorial time**, encourage pupils to think about what forms homophobic bullying takes. Is it just about bullying gay pupils? Think about: • Language pupils' use with each other. • How pupils judge others when they don't act in an expected way. • How we assume being different is inferior. • What are the similarities and differences between racist bullying, religious bullying and sexist bullying?	• If there are gay pupils in your class, be careful not to treat them differently or expect them to offer more insight or observations, unless they want to. Gay pupils report that when issues relating to sexual orientation are raised in class, they are picked out, or referred to by name in examples. • Expect some views to be uncomfortable. Pupils won't learn overnight that homophobic bullying is unacceptable, nor will they be expected to change their mind immediately. The point is to indicate that homophobic bullying is unacceptable.
Produce an age-appropriate **poster** or leaflet that explains what homophobic bullying is and the effect it has. Circulate this via notice boards, or via the school intranet. Think about: • Pupils who experience homophobic bullying don't always consider it to be a form of bullying. They need to be able to identify incidents. • Pupils may not want to raise issues about bullying in a public place. This gives them the tools they need. • Bullies may not know they are bullies. This gives them a private space to consider their actions.	• Ensure that the leaflet details what bullying is, and includes reference to cyberbullying and bullying outside school. • State explicitly that homophobic bullying is not tolerated in schools, and staff will respond effectively if they are told about incidents. Some pupils fear that staff will bully them as well, especially if they are gay. • Provide age-appropriate information about where gay pupils can get external support – such as good websites, or local youth groups. • Consider naming a teacher who pupils can discuss sexuality issues with. This will reassure them that the teacher will be trustworthy. Neither staff nor pupils should feel obliged to disclose any personal information.

Idea	Notes to consider
Discuss with pupils the sensitivities around **reporting** homophobic bullying, and ask them to come up with ways to improve reporting of incidents. Learning objectives • pupils to understand why there might be sensitivities around reporting homophobic bullying. • to set out how the school responds to incidents of homophobic bullying.	• Pupils will be anxious about reporting homophobic bullying and this collective process will give you an opportunity to reiterate that staff understand these sensitivities. • Pupils are more likely to use systems that they have helped develop themselves. They will also be more likely to spot the loopholes in any system.
Sign up to national schemes, use resources from other organisations, seek out good practice and share your own.	• Talk about homophobic bullying in general work, as well as during tutorial, via newsletters, intranet, and celebratory days, including LGBT History month.