DL29: Summary – Addressing homophobic bullying in your school

To create an inclusive environment in your school where all pupils feel safe and are able to fulfil their potential requires a whole school approach. This should be integral to your school's mission statement and overall vision. The following ten steps can be taken to address homophobic bullying in your school:

1. **Acknowledge and identify the problem of bullying.** *The most important step is to recognise that all sorts of bullying takes place in schools, even if some forms are not immediately visible.*

2. **Develop policies which recognise the existence of homophobic bullying.** *Ensure that your anti-bullying policy takes homophobic bullying into account. Take other appropriate action such as challenging use of the word 'gay' and ensuring fast removal of graffiti.*

3. **Promote a positive social environment.** *The ethos of the entire school community, including all staff and parents, ought to be to support all pupils, regardless of their differences and to ensure that they are happy and safe.*

4. **Address staff training needs.** *Do not assume that only lesbian, gay and bisexual staff are able to deal with homophobic bullying, but ensure all staff are confident they know how to react to such situations.*

5. **Provide information and support for pupils.** *Make age-appropriate information about services and support available to secondary age pupils through noticeboards, school planners and websites.*

6. **Include addressing anti-bullying including homophobic bullying in curriculum planning.** *Try to include teaching about anti-bullying including homophobic bullying in the curriculum as a whole in an age-appropriate way and in accordance with National Curriculum subject frameworks and guidance so that pupils understand and appreciate diversity. This can be done formally in lesson times, but also informally e.g. by providing information about LGB groups in appropriate places within secondary schools (and in line with school policy) .*

7. **Feel able to use outside expertise.** *People working in external agencies (such as lesbian and gay charities, youth workers or local telephone helplines) can offer support, both outside and inside the classroom, in addressing homophobic bullying.*

8. **Use positive role models.** *Openly gay staff, governors, parents/carers and/or pupils can all be strong role models for the school.*

9. **Do not make assumptions.** *Do not assume that all pupils in a class are, or will be, heterosexual. Do not assume that all staff in a school or college are heterosexual. And do not assume that all pupils experiencing homophobic bullying are gay.*

10. **Celebrate achievements.** *Make successes known, such as updating the school anti-bullying policy or reducing the incidence of bullying, through tutorial time, newsletters, notice boards or websites etc.*