

Stonewall Scotland submission on Personal and Social Education

Background

Many LGBT young people don't feel included in school, and bullying and experiences of discrimination remain common. [Stonewall Scotland's School Report](#) found that more than two in five of lesbian, gay and bi young people disagree that their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome'. LGBT young people often feel that their experiences aren't reflected in the curriculum; almost half of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils in Scotland are never taught anything about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in their lessons. This is particularly true of Personal and Social Education.

High quality Personal and Social Education is essential in making sure all young people have the information they need to have healthy and fulfilling relationships. However, many schools do not provide inclusive PSE (Sssh... No Talking, Terrence Higgins Trust, 2016), meaning that not all young people are able to benefit from this. [Stonewall Scotland's School Report](#) showed that more than four in five (83 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in Scotland are never taught about biological or physical aspects of same-sex relationships in school. Four in five (80 per cent) are never taught about where to go for help and advice about same-sex relationships. Information about gender identity or trans issues is also provided very inconsistently – 93 per cent of young people who took part in Terrence Higgins Trust's survey on sex and relationships education said that they were not taught about issues relating to trans people. This inconsistency leaves LGBT young people without the information they need to have safe and healthy relationships.

PSE which includes LGBT issues is also key to ensuring that young people become responsible citizens, and tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and prejudice. However, this is also not addressed consistently in Scottish schools. Less than three in five LGB young people say that their school says homophobic bullying is wrong. If we want young people in Scotland to help create an inclusive society, it is vital that these issues are addressed.

Stonewall Scotland's position

Stonewall Scotland believes that all schools should ensure that PSE lessons cover LGBT issues and relationships. Topics such as consent, abuse and online safety should be taught, and this should be done so in a way that is inclusive to the issues that LGBT young people may face. To help achieve this, Stonewall Scotland works with teachers and schools across the country to empower them to deliver a curriculum that is LGBT inclusive and create inclusive school environments. We have reached over 120 schools through our Train the Trainer programme, which raises teacher confidence in tackling HBT bullying and addressing LGBT issues in their schools. It equips teachers to train their colleagues, sharing their knowledge and confidence with others. We also work with local authorities through our Education Champions programme, and facilitate the sharing of best practice through our Education For All Conference.

However, there is a great inconsistency in the way LGBT issues are addressed across Scotland, and in the delivery of PSE. Because of this, we believe that making PSE a mandatory part of the curriculum would be a useful step. However, this must be underpinned by an investment of resource, training and clear guidelines for those delivering PSE so that they have the knowledge, confidence and skills to deliver high quality, inclusive, education.

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