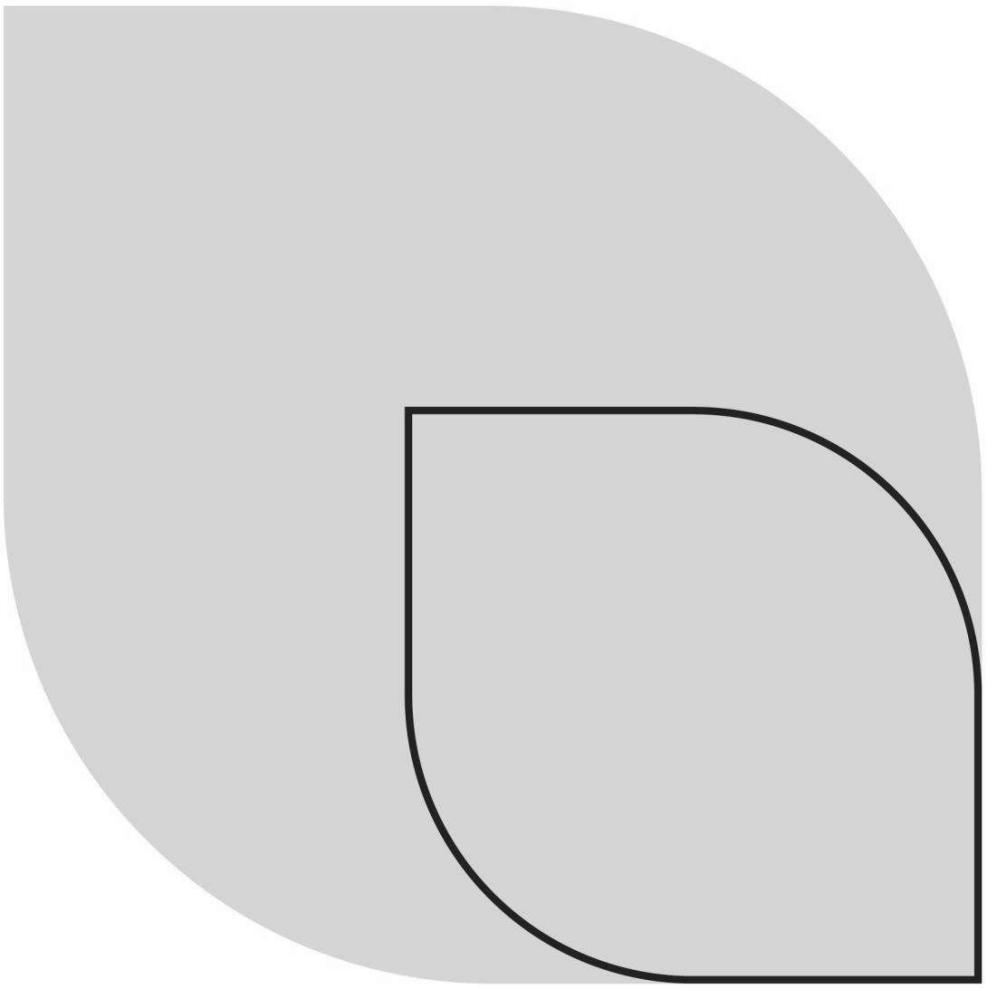
National Society for Education
Church of England & Church in Wales

Flourishing for All: Anti-bullying Guidance for Church of England Schools

September 2024



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Foreword

Bullying has no place in our schools. Every child deserves to learn in an environment where they are loved, supported, and respected.

The Church of England's Vision for Education, 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good', sets out the core principles that underpin our commitment to education.[1] This vision has anchored and underpinned our collective work since it was published in 2016. It will do so for years to come as we continue to play our role in serving the children, young people, families and communities of this nation through our schools.

The outworking of this vision is grounded in the desire to shape education for 'life in all its fullness' (John 10.10). One of its four central pillars is Educating for Dignity and Respect. In rearticulating our vision through the publication of *Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System* we have set out what that dignity and respect entails. We write: "All children deserve to love their childhood, finding space for play, exploration, imagination and creativity. They should be surrounded by loving relationships, structures and systems which release and enable life in all its fullness."[2]

Our hope and prayer is that these resources will be used by schools across the country to enable such flourishing and ensure that each and every child, knowing they are unique and made in the image of God, will find in our schools a safe environment where bullying of any kind is not tolerated. They should all know themselves to be loved, supported and championed, irrespective of physical appearance, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, academic ability, disability, age or sexual orientation.

'*Flourishing for All*' helps schools to offer the Christian message of love, joy and the celebration of our humanity without exception or exclusion. I commend this guidance as an ongoing and evolving contribution to that work.

The Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Frost, Bishop of Portsmouth
Lead Bishop for Education and Chair of The National Society

[1] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, [internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

[2] The Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System, page 9 [Internet], Available at Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf (contentfiles.net)

Introduction

The Anti-bullying Alliance survey in 2023 revealed that almost 1 in 4 (23%) of children in England's schools report being frequently bullied, resulting in a much poorer experience of school. [3] For the last 10 years, the National Society for Education (Church of England Education Office) has sought to support Church schools in tackling bullying. We first produced *Valuing all God's Children* in 2014 as guidance on the prevention of homophobic bullying in response to the commitment made by the Archbishop of Canterbury to eradicate homophobic bullying in all Church of England schools.

In the decade that has followed, Church of England schools have addressed these issues with great determination, yet the debate about human sexuality and especially gender has frequently been toxic and polarised, which does nothing to help the young people caught in the middle and whose wellbeing should be our first priority. Over those ten years terminology and understanding has evolved and the real and virtual world in which our children and young people grow up has also transformed at an incredible rate. There have been remarkable advances in technology which have brought with them particular challenges in the area of bullying, especially with the widespread use of smartphones. Young people now grow up in a world that is increasingly dominated by social media, where cyberbullying is having an alarming impact on the mental health of children and young people.

Through all of this, schools have sought to act in the best interests of their children. In doing so they have sometimes found themselves caught up in an ideological battleground and a debate that has far-reaching and often legal consequences. Understandably, there have been calls from school leaders for greater clarity and guidance from government to help them navigate such a complex and fast changing context.

Specific guidance on the most contested area of the debate has only recently been addressed through the publication of the Department for Education's draft guidance on Gender Questioning Children[4]. This was followed by the publication in April 2024 of the final report and recommendations to NHS England from Dr Hilary Cass in her role as Chair of the Independent Review of gender identity services for children and young people[5].

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[3] Anti Bullying Alliance, Pupil bullying, wellbeing and school experiences in schools in England , 2023, [Internet], Available at : Pupil bullying, wellbeing and school experiences in schools in England 2023_0.pdf (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

[4] Department for Education, Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance, December 2023, [Internet], Available at : https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender-questioning-children-proposed-guidance/supporting_documents/Gender%20Questioning%20Children%20%20nonstatutory%20guidance.pdf

[5] Dr Hillary Cass, Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people: Final report, April 2024 [Internet], Available at : https://cass.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CassReview_Final.pdf

With the publication of the DfE draft guidance a period of consultation has followed and we await the publication of a final version by the new government. The government's draft guidance is now the primary reference point for all schools seeking clarity for children and parents in ensuring that all the pupils and adults in their school communities are honoured and treated consistently and fairly.

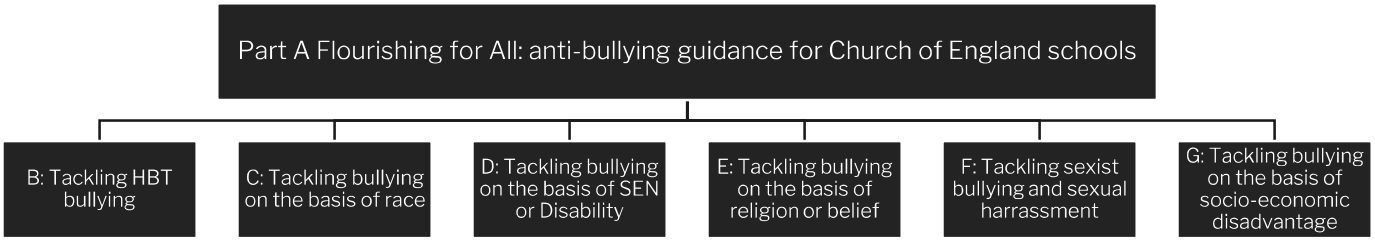
We know that for many schools and individuals, *Valuing all God's Children* has been a helpful resource in addressing bullying. The absence of any previous specific guidance for gender questioning children has sometimes meant that commentators interpreted *Valuing all God's Children* as a document setting out the Church's teaching on gender. It never purported to be that and was always intended to be a specific resource to enable schools to address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. This is a journey we remain firmly committed to. However, now the government's draft guidance is available and the Cass review has finally been published, we are replacing *Valuing all God's Children* with a broader suite of documents of which Part B: Guidance for preventing and tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying is the first. This gives us the opportunity to enable and encourage schools to apply the same level of care to prevent and deal with bullying in all areas, especially in relation to other areas where sadly bullying is prevalent. Further sections will follow focusing on race, special educational needs or disability, religion and belief, sexual harassment and socio-economic disadvantage.

Schools should and will refer to the government guidance for appropriate detail in every area, but our hope for Church schools is that these resources will enable them to implement that guidance in the context of the Church of England Vision for Education which sets out a deeply Christian approach and seeks the flourishing of all for the common good. For in all of the complexity of these discussions it is vital that the dignity of every child as being made in the image of God is valued.

Revd Canon Nigel Genders CBE
Chief Education Officer

Part A: Our hope for a flourishing school system - affording each person the dignity to live and learn without fear

This suite of guidance is designed to enable Church of England schools to understand how to tackle different types of bullying. It explains how the Church of England *Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good*[6] and subsequent documentation require schools to take seriously any harm caused towards its pupils, as well as the adults within the school community. Beyond this, it outlines the importance of focusing specifically on different groups whom research has shown are at higher risk of bullying than other pupils.[7] The expectation for Church schools[8] is that their approach to protecting vulnerable pupils should emanate from their Christian vision to secure **flourishing for all**.



The guidance is split into several sections. This section, Part A, deals with the reasons why tackling bullying is integral to flourishing for all. That includes our Christian vision for anti-bullying along with the legal, statutory and inspection frameworks Church schools are expected to work within. Subsequent sections, Parts B – E, deal with the specific nature of tackling bullying on the basis of different characteristics. These sections sit side-by-side, since each area is a key concern for Church schools today, and there should be no hierarchy in protecting pupils and adults from harm. Moreover, schools will ideally use these parts alongside one another, since we know that where pupils or adults have more than one area of vulnerability, their likelihood of being bullied increases. Once all sections have been published, this aims to be a comprehensive resource for Church schools in having the language, tools and confidence to challenge rigorously any repeated and intentional harm done to members of their school community.

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[6] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, [internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

[7] Anti Bullying Alliance, At-risk groups, [Internet], Available at https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/at-risk-groups

[8] Where we have used the term 'Church schools' this means Church of England schools specifically

Each section of the specific parts (B to G) will address:

- our Christian imperative for focusing on that particular type of bullying
- the specific nature of that type of bullying within Church schools
- particular concerns or complexities that exist specifically for Church schools in that area
- advice on how to be proactive in building a culture where bullying is unacceptable
- guidance on how to deal with any bullying that might happen, including how to support those affected
- phase-specific guidance for preventing and tackling this type of bullying
- key recommendations for schools, dioceses and the National Society for Education

Part A Executive Summary

- A deeply Christian vision, which serves the common good, expects flourishing for all. This includes both pupils and adults within a school community.
- Flourishing requires every member of a school community to be valued as having inherent worth, especially the most vulnerable.
- Our Vision for Education is centred on Jesus' promise of 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). In stark contrast to this promise, bullying in schools causes harm to individuals, damages relationships and fills communities with fear.
- It is therefore essential for Church schools to ensure every pupil and adult is protected from harm, and to prioritise those most at risk of bullying.
- Particular groups are at a higher risk of being bullied and therefore require special attention.
- There can be a cumulative effect for those with a range of different characteristics and vulnerabilities and therefore Church schools need to consider an intersectional approach to anti-bullying.
- All schools, including Church schools, are required to comply with the law, statutory guidance and inspection frameworks in their approach to anti-bullying.
- The starting point for tackling all forms of bullying is a welcoming and inclusive culture in which all pupils and adults feel a sense of belonging.
- The drive to eliminate bullying should go beyond compliance to deep compassion and relentless pursuit of flourishing for all.

1. Flourishing in schools: our approach

In 2016, the Church of England published its Vision for Education: *Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good.*[9] This is a vision for 'life in all its fullness' for both children and adults, in all schools across the country. It articulates this through four domains: educating for wisdom, knowledge and skills; educating for hope and aspiration; educating for community and living well together; educating for dignity and respect. It is a vision which is firmly rooted in Christian teaching, particularly the words and life of Jesus, and it is a vision which is inclusive of all, regardless of religion, belief or background. It is a call to remember our purpose in education – to ensure the flourishing of those within our community. In a school context, this looks primarily like academic and vocational flourishing, which in itself requires physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing.

This calling was then explored more fully in the 2020 document: *Called, Connected, Committed.*[10] The document sets out 24 Leadership Practices which enable school leaders to deliver the four domains of the Vision for Education (wisdom, hope, community and dignity). *Called* leaders stay rooted in their sense of vocation, *connected* leaders develop deep relationships and networks to enable effectiveness, and *committed leaders* stand firm for the long term to achieve visionary goals. Again, flourishing is at the heart of these practices: 'leaders unlock opportunities for their children to flourish'.[11]

A deeper understanding of what 'flourishing' might look like within a school context is set out in *Flourishing Together*[12] and *Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System*.[13] These texts, underpinned by extensive research, make it clear that the flourishing of children cannot be seen in isolation from the flourishing of adults and their wider school communities. We 'flourish together, not alone' is a key theme of this work.[14] Indeed, *Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System* reminds us that the history of the Church's role in education 'was centred on social justice, access for all and a deep investment in the flourishing of children, adults and communities through the transformational power of education, free at the point of access.'[15] Therefore it is important to remember that while the flourishing of

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[9] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

[10] David F Ford and Andy Wolfe, Called, Collected, Committed, [internet] February 2020, Available at https://cofefoundation.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Called_Connected_Committed_-_David_Ford_and_Andy_Wolfe.pdf

[11] David F Ford and Andy Wolfe, Called, Collected, Committed, page 13 [internet] February 2020, Available at https://cofefoundation.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Called_Connected_Committed_-_David_Ford_and_Andy_Wolfe.pdf

[12] Swaner, Land Wolfe, A, Flourishing Together: A Christian Vision for Students, Educators, and Schools, William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2022

[13] The Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System, [Internet], Available at https://cofefoundation.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf

[14] The Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System, page 12 [Internet], Available at Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf (contentfiles.net)

[15] The Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System, page 4 [Internet], Available at Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf (contentfiles.net)

children is at the very heart of a school's purpose and mission, this cannot (and should not) be extricated from the flourishing of the adults in that school community.

The ecology of flourishing outlined in these documents is worked out through understanding a school's purpose, building belonging and strong relationships, ensuring everyone can learn, making best use of resources and prioritising wellbeing.

Difference for Schools (2024)[16], commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, aims to address the complexities and divisions of our society by equipping pupils with the tools to navigate difference, disagreement and fractures. The resource supports pupils, and the adults who work with them, to develop empathy in everyday encounters.

This document aims to instill foundational values of inclusivity, respect, and appreciation of diversity from an early age, drawing on the teachings of Jesus to love one another and treat others with kindness and compassion. By fostering these qualities during formative years, children and young people will be better equipped to thrive in a globalised society – and ultimately contribute towards building a more compassionate and just world.

The Difference Course equips pupils with three formational habits that can transform everyday relationships:

Be Curious - Listen to others' stories and see the world through their eyes.

Be Present - Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.

Reimagine - Find hope and opportunity in places where we long to see change.

These three habits are extremely important in creating school cultures which 'deal with… difference'[17] in such a way that enables everyone to be valued, heard and kept safe from harm. This is critical in creating cultures which prevent bullying, as when difference is valued and engaged with, pupils are likely to view their peers and wider community with increased dignity and respect.

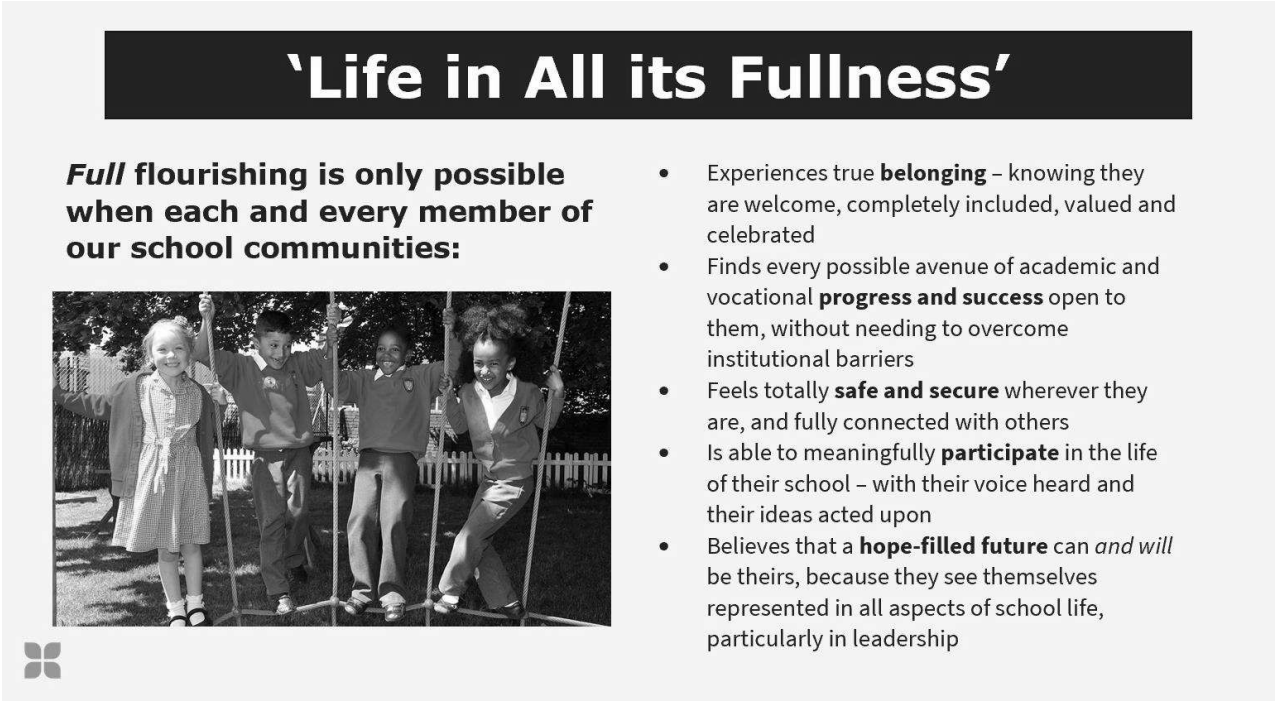
2. Why anti-bullying should be at the heart of any flourishing school

'Flourishing children are to be loved unconditionally, enabled ambitiously, supported compassionately and championed relentlessly.' [18]

At the heart of a deeply Christian vision for schools is an upholding of the worth of each person: all are made in the image of God – and are thus innately worthy of dignity and honour. The hallmark of

[16] The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Difference Course [Internet], Available from : https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/priorities/reconciliation/difference-course
[17] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 12 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf
[18] The Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System, page 9 [Internet], Available at Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf (contentfiles.net),

authentic, life-giving relationships is recognition of the uniqueness and value of the other so that all are welcomed wholeheartedly. Each individual should be able to flourish, irrespective of physical appearance, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, age or sexual orientation.



Therefore, any barriers to full flourishing must be addressed as a matter of urgency. 'Ensuring our children are kept safely from harm and educated in an environment where all God's children are valued is of the highest priority'.[19] Research tells us that pupils can only learn effectively in environments where they feel safe: 'an unsafe environment can raise anxiety and lead to class avoidance and/or disengagement.'[20] Around a third of pupils who display emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) have experienced bullying or relationship issues, causing them to be fearful of attending school at all.[21] Furthermore, if bullying towards one particular group is left unchecked, it leaves other members of the community feeling more vulnerable.

The purpose of this suite of documents is to help schools address **any repeated and intentional harm** that children and young people may experience within or through their school contexts, and the

[19] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 11 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf
[20] Advance HA, Education for Mental Health Toolkit, [Internet], Available here : Education for Mental Health Toolkit - Psychologically safe learning environment | Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk);
[21] Leeds Beckett University, Emotionally Based School Avoidance: How to get persistently absent children back into school, p10 [Internet] Available here : EBSA Guide | Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools | Leeds Beckett University

cultures which enable this to take place. Doing so is essential for any school aiming to see 'life in all its fullness' – and therefore seeking to eliminate fear - for its children, staff and wider community.

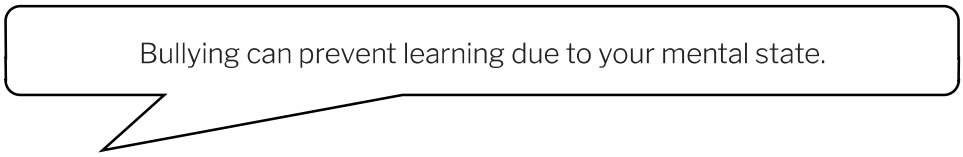
2.1 Prevention of Bullying

The Department for Education defines bullying as 'behaviour that is:

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
- often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation'[22]

Bullying of any kind has no place within our schools and every effort must be made to eliminate it. The Vision for Education states: 'among issues especially relevant to dignity in education are safeguarding, **prevention of bullying**, special educational needs and disabilities.'[23] From an individual perspective, bullying damages and diminishes the preciousness of each person. From a community perspective, bullying fractures and undermines the whole since 'if one part suffers, every part suffers with it.' (1 Corinthians 12:26). Or in the words of Ricoeur, 'we are only persons with each other: our humanity is 'co-humanity'[24]

Bullying prevents belonging and inclusion for those being bullied, hinders academic and vocational progress, diminishes the ability or desire to participate in school life and disconnects them from others. Pupils in our survey said:



In the most extreme cases, bullying can lead to self-harm or, long-term, to suicidal ideation.[25] Bullying robs children, young people and adults of their present safety and security, whilst diminishing their hope for a flourishing future. This is particularly true if a child or adult is being bullied about an aspect of their identity or a characteristic that, by law, should be protected. The members of our school

[22] Gov.uk, Bullying - a definition, [Internet], Available at Bullying at school: Bullying - a definition - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[23] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 11 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf
[24] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 7 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf
[25] The Anti Bullying Alliance, The Impact of Bullying, [Internet], Available at : The impact of bullying (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

communities need to know and feel that **who** they are is valued, **what** they have experienced in life is understood, and **how** they live and practise what they believe is respected.

Bullying is obviously extremely harmful to the victims, but it also harms the perpetrators. Research by the Anti-bullying Alliance suggests that those who engage in bullying are 'the most likely to report poor experiences at school'.[26] By engaging in bullying, a person is causing damage to their victims, their community – fracturing relationships and destroying any sense of 'living well together' – and ultimately to themselves. Jesus' imperative to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 7:12) clearly applies to the way we are to treat one another with dignity and respect. It is also worth being mindful that this can only be enacted if a person has the sufficient self-worth to recognise what love actually looks like. There are no excuses for bullying, but for Church schools – who often employ restorative justice approaches – there is a mandate to engage with the perpetrators to understand the behaviour and work with them to put an end to it. There are many reasons why someone might engage in bullying behaviour. As well as causing fear, bullying can often emanate from fear; fear of 'those who seem … dangerously different',[27] fear of not joining in with others who are bullying or fear of exposure, being seen as they truly are. The Bible tells us 'there is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear' (1 John 4:18). School cultures focused on the flourishing of all prioritise belonging over distance,[28] embrace over exclusion[29], dialogue over division and love over fear.

2.2 Forms of Bullying

In order to understand what it is a Church school should do to demonstrate its vision for the flourishing of all and its commitment to tackling bullying in service of that vision, it is important to recognise what bullying actually looks like.

Context:	Bullying behaviours that might occur:
In-school bullying	Bullying actions on the school site might include: • Use of discriminatory or offensive language, name-calling • Physical harm, including threats of physical harm • Coercive and harmful sexual behaviour • Damage to property or stealing • Repeated exclusion from groups, games and other activities • Intentional ignoring to cause hurt • Sharing of untrue or private information without permission

[2626] The Anti Bullying Alliance, Pupil bullying, wellbeing and school experiences in schools in England, page 4, [Internet], Available at : Pupil bullying, wellbeing and school experiences in schools in England 2023_0.pdf (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

[27] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 12 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

[28] Volf, M. *Exclusion and Embrace*, Abingdon Press, (2019) p25

[29] Ibid

Off-site bullying	Bullying actions (such as those above) which occur off the school site. This includes bullying which takes place on the journey to and from school. Schools retain powers to tackle these behaviours, even if they occur off-site.[30]
Online bullying (cyber-bullying)	Bullying actions which occur online, such as through social media or messaging apps. These can include: • Use of discriminatory or offensive language, name-calling • Threats of physical harm • Attempts to coerce another into unwanted sexual activities • Repeated exclusion from groups, games and other activities • Intentional ignoring to cause hurt • Sharing of untrue or private information without permission • Creation and sharing of images intended to denigrate or shame another person • Inappropriate or unkind commenting on social media posts

Research shows that more than likely, bullying will cross over two or more of these contexts, so that it feels pervasive to the whole of life.[31]

When pupils were asked 'what does your school do well to stop people being bullied?' we received this response:

> They do give you support if it is necessary. However, it is difficult for them to tackle bullying that takes place outside of the school day, and it is also difficult to fully put a stop to the bullying.

With the constant rise of the online world, children and young people are often unable to escape bullying which can follow them wherever they are. Moreover, studies are beginning to show how reducing smartphone usage can decrease instances of bullying.[32][33] Schools should be very mindful of the ways in which smartphone usage can contribute to bullying, both in and out of school, and give due regard to this in setting and reviewing their policies around mobile devices. Whilst mobile devices

[30] Gov. uk, Behaviour in schools: sanctions and exclusions, [Internet], Available at : Behaviour in schools: sanctions and exclusions: School behaviour policy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[31] Anti Bullying Alliance, What is online bullying?, [Internet], Available at : What is online bullying? (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)
[32] Emerald Insight, Banning mobile phones in schools: evidence from regional-level policies in Spain, [Internet], Available at : Banning mobile phones in schools: evidence from regional-level policies in Spain | Emerald Insight
[33] UNESCO, Global education monitoring report, 2023: technology in education: a tool on whose terms?, [Internet], Available at : Global education monitoring report, 2023: technology in education: a tool on whose terms? - UNESCO Digital Library

such as smartphones can support learning, they can also be utilised to cyberbully. Without the victim physically present, careless and unkind messaging or rumour-spreading can feel easier and can quickly spiral into harmful targeting and victimisation.

Therefore any approach to tackling and eliminating bullying needs to go beyond the school to engage families and households, churches, local community groups and other partners involved in pupils' lives. Each section of this resource will look at the particular considerations needed when working beyond the school around different types of bullying.

3. Church schools' duties with regards to bullying

3.1 Educating children to live in modern Britain and a global society

Modern Britain is a diverse and multicultural society, enriched by its complex history and global influences. To prepare pupils for this diverse world, Church of England schools must prioritise creating an inclusive culture that promotes dignity and respect for all individuals. Understanding and implementing legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is essential for educators.[34] This knowledge empowers them to lead discussions that reduce bullying, prevent trauma, and support the flourishing of all pupils.

Church schools have a long history of acting as safe havens of love and reconciliation. Additionally, resources such as the *Difference for Schools* materials can play an instrumental role in developing the habits needed to navigate difference well: being curious, being present and reimagining. The resource leads children and young people to explore human libraries beyond their immediate contexts, fostering empathy and understanding of diverse global communities. 'It's no longer about just preparing for your local community but it's about preparing for a global community which we are a big part of'. [33]

The increasing visibility of diverse role models with whom children and young people can identify has made a significant impact upon diverse communities. However, this progress is not an indicator that the UK and wider world are considered safe and welcoming by people from all marginalised groups and backgrounds. Whilst all inhabitants of this country, including children, are formally protected by the Equality Act 2010, many children and young people living in the UK are still subjected to discriminatory and exclusionary behaviours.

Over the last ten years, hate crime has almost quadrupled.[35] Around 70% of hate crime is directed at people where race is a protected characteristic. 5.6% was based on religion and 9% based on disability. 16.5% of hate crimes were motivated by homophobia or biphobia, with 3% motivated by transphobia. However, transgender hate crime has increased by 11% compared to the previous year.[36]

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[34] Miller, P. , Understanding EDIJ in Education, 2022, Academic Press.
[35] House of Commons Library, Hate Crime Statistics, January 2024, [Internet], Available at : Hate Crime Statistics - House of Commons Library (parliament.uk)
[36] Home Office, Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition, November 2023, [Internet] Available at : Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)



It is therefore possible that pupils in Church schools may have either experienced or witnessed criminally harmful behaviour towards a person or people on the basis of their gender, race, religion or sexuality (for example), and will need support for the impact this has upon them.

Schools play a critical role in educating children and young people about hate and acceptance, as well as how to live well together with people who may not share the same ways of life or beliefs as they do. The consequences of not doing so stands in opposition to flourishing for all in the modern world. Everyone deserves to live in a world free from fear. Therefore, schools should support all pupils to know their worth so they can protect themselves or know how to find the support they need. The United Nations charter on the 'Rights of the Child'[37] can be a very useful place to start with this; many Church schools are already 'Rights Respecting Schools' weaving this through their approach to inclusion.[38]

3.2 The legal framework for tackling bullying towards those with protected characteristics

All Church of England schools and academies are subject to English law and are required to ensure their compliance with legal duties and statutory documentation. This requirement must underpin any approach to tackling bullying, particularly bullying towards those with protected characteristics. More than this, though, a church school's Christian vision should be one that seeks the flourishing of each and every pupil, founded upon excellent safeguarding practice and a deep love for those most at risk of harm. In the words of the prophet Ezekiel, 'they will live in safety and no one will make them afraid.'[39]

In order to fulfil this mandate, schools and those working with schools to support them (including diocesan boards of education, school trusts, governing boards and churches) need to have a secure grasp of the legal and statutory frameworks underpinning this work.

3.2.1 The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination (both direct and indirect), harassment and victimisation based upon an actual or perceived protected characteristic.

The nine protected characteristics under the Act are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment[40]

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[37] United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, [Internet] Available at : https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf

[38] UNICEF, The Rights Respecting Schools, [Internet] Available at : The Rights Respecting Schools Award | UNICEF UK

[39] Ezekiel 34:28

[40] We recognise that this is the legal terminology currently used in the Equality Act and therefore use it here. In this document, we only use the term *transgender* in relation to adults. See the glossary (Appendix 2) for more information.



- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion and belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Part 6 of the Equality Act, which applies to all maintained schools and academies, makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil in various respects, including:

- in relation to admissions.
- in the way it provides education for pupils.
- in the way it affords pupils access to any benefit, facility or service.
- by excluding a pupil.
- by subjecting a pupil to any other detriment.

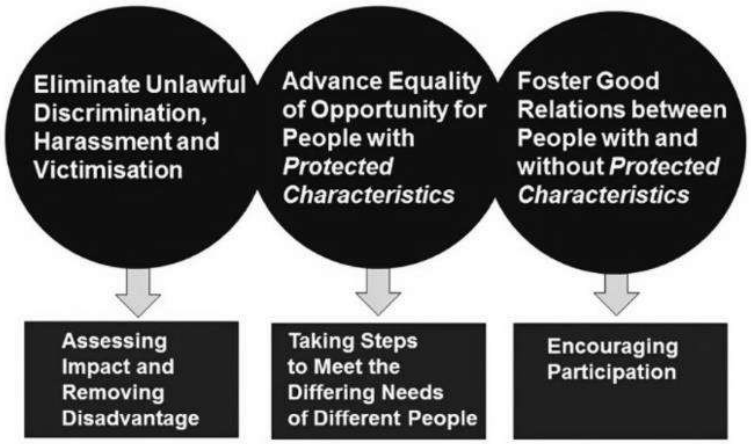
With regards to bullying in schools, it pertains to how a school deals with bullying incidents; it does not apply to how pupils treat one another.[41]

3.2.2 Public Sector Equality Duty

A key provision of the Act is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which places a general duty on public authorities (including schools) to be proactive in addressing inequalities. The PSED requires schools to have due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate** discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- **advance** equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- **foster** good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

[41] Department for Education, The Equality Act 2010 and schools, [Internet] Available at : Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)



If someone thinks they have been discriminated against, they may bring proceedings in a court or Employment Tribunal. Failure to observe the Public Sector Equality Duty could result in enforcement action by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It could also put schools and other establishments at risk of challenge on grounds of discriminatory practice, not to mention failing to prevent the negative effects of prejudice and discrimination on children.

The effect of the PSED is to require schools to have regard to the matters it addresses in both their policy making and in their decision-making in individual cases. Schools should consciously consider the need to comply with the PSED both when a policy is developed, and also when it is implemented.

The implications of the PSED in relation to the elimination of harassment and the fostering of good relations make it clear that schools and other establishments must address bullying and prejudice-related incidents based on a protected characteristic, such as racism or homophobic bullying. The expectation in law is not only for schools and establishments to respond when an incident occurs but also to take steps to try and prevent those incidents from occurring or escalating. Schools and establishments can only do this if they have a sense of what is happening in their environment, effective procedures which staff understand and support, and a leadership that creates a culture of trust and respect.

3.2.3 The Education and Inspections Act 2006

There are a number of statutory obligations on schools with regard to behaviour that establish clear responsibilities for responding to bullying. In particular, Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006:

- Provides that every school must have measures to encourage good behaviour and respect for others and to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils.
- Gives headteachers the ability to ensure that pupils behave when they are not on school premises or under the lawful control of school staff.



The measures – implemented to encourage good behaviour – should be part of the school's behaviour policy and this must be communicated to the whole school community: pupils, staff and parents.[42]

3.2.4 Equality information and objectives

Secondary legislation imposes specific duties that support the general PSED. Current guidance expects schools to provide information about compliance with the general duty – this information must be published online and updated annually.[43] What is published will vary according to school size but it could include basic data supported by a narrative of the number and type of incidents reported and resolved. Care must be taken not to publish any details that could identify specific individuals, since this would violate the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Schools should also set any objectives required to further the aims of the general PSED and review them regularly.[44] These objectives could relate to bullying and prejudice related incidents, as necessary and appropriate. A school can include relevant objectives in the school's development plan.

3.2.5 Criminal law

Bullying is not a criminal offence in the UK but some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could be a criminal offence (for example, under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003 or the Public Order Act 1986). For example, under section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.[45]

The current age of criminal responsibility in the UK is 10, and therefore schools will need to help children understand the legal implications of criminal bullying behaviour which can result in them becoming subject to criminal proceedings and consequences which will last a lifetime.

If staff believe that a criminal offence may have been committed they should report this to the police and take their advice before acting further.

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[42] Department for Education, Preventing and tackling bullying Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2017, page 5 [Internet] Available at : Preventing and tackling bullying (publishing.service.gov.uk)
[43] Gov. uk, What academies and further education colleges must or should publish online, [Internet], Available at : What academies and further education colleges must or should publish online - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk); see also EHRC, Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England, April 2023 [Internet] Available at: Technical guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England | EHRC (equalityhumanrights.com)
[44] Ibid.
[45] Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling Bullying, 2017, page 6 [Internet] Available at : Preventing bullying - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

3.3 Safeguarding Children and Young People: Keeping Children Safe in Education

The expectation to address any bullying behaviour, especially that which occurs on the basis of a protected characteristic (e.g. towards SEND pupils or those who are LGB/GQ[46]) is threaded throughout Section 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), and is therefore essential to a school's safeguarding policies and procedures.[47] Bullying towards pupils who have SEN or a disability, towards those who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ, racial discrimination and sexualised bullying as part of sexual harassment are all specifically outlined within KCSiE. There are particular considerations for the online world, and the prominence of cyberbullying. KCSiE also outlines the duties of schools with regards to differing types of bullying under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED – see 3.2.2 above).[48]

Under the Children Act 1989, a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.'[49] Where this is the case, staff should report their concerns to their local authority's children social care team. Even when a case has not reached the safeguarding threshold of significant harm, schools and other establishments may need to draw on a range of external services to support a child who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child bullying another.

Schools are specifically expected to make every effort to prevent child-on-child abuse. Child-on-child abuse can look like:[50]

- Bullying (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying)
- Hate incidents or hate crimes (including online)
- Abuse between young people in an intimate relationship
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking hair pulling, or threats of physical harm
- Racism (including verbal abuse or physical attacks)
- Sexual violence (such as sexual assault)
- Sexual harassment (in person or online)
- Coercive sexual behaviour
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images or videos
- Upskirting
- Initiation or hazing violence or rituals
- Misogyny (prejudice towards girls and women) or misandry (prejudice towards boys and men)

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[46] In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024), this document uses LGB/GQ throughout to refer to children and young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or gender questioning
[47] Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024 [Internet] Available at : Keeping children safe in education 2024 (publishing.service.gov.uk)
[48] ibid, p28
[49] Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling Bullying, July 2017, Page 6, [Internet] Available at : Preventing and tackling bullying (publishing.service.gov.uk)
[50]Farrer and co, Addressing child-on-child abuse: a resource for schools and colleges, September 2023, [Internet] Available at : addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf (farrer.co.uk)

3.4 Ofsted

Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (2023) makes it clear that schools must address bullying. Under Behaviour and Attitudes, it states that: 'Leaders, teachers, other staff and learners create an environment where bullying, learner-on-learner abuse or discrimination are not tolerated. If they do occur, staff deal with issues quickly and effectively, and do not allow them to spread.' [51]

The inspection framework also directs inspectors to look at how the school supports the needs of distinct groups of pupils, such as 'girls or lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender pupils' and those with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents or carers. It expects to see 'an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, and where no discrimination exists.' [52]

4. Specific expectations for Church of England schools

4.1 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) and Anti-Bullying

The 2023 SIAMS Framework sets out the expectations by which Church of England and Methodist schools and academies will be judged. Starting with a contextually appropriate Christian vision that reflects the school's foundation and meets the needs of its current community, SIAMS explores ways in which that vision enables pupils and adults to flourish.

Intrinsic elements of being able to flourish are being safe and being treated well – with dignity and respect - regardless of difference or disagreement. This principle applies to each person, because each one is made in the image of God and is precious.

Bullying is therefore unacceptable. There are no exceptions to this, and it will always be at odds with a Church school's vision. A journey through the SIAMS inspection questions enables us to understand this in the following ways.

- A school's Christian vision should be entirely commensurate with the premise that bullying of any kind and of any person is both unacceptable and at odds with the purpose of a Church school.
- The school's curriculum should, in turn, reflect that vision. Therefore, it should reinforce the inherent expectation that acceptance of and love for others are basic human characteristics that will be nurtured and grown. The curriculum will reinforce the principle that bullying of any kind has no place in the life of the school.
- Furthermore the school's worship life, and the concomitant focus on the spiritual growth of both adults and pupils, should reinforce that to be made in the image of God and to be human is to be diverse. Understanding of difference, therefore, is a key element of developing as a

[51] Gov. uk, Education Inspection Framework, [Internet], Available at : Education inspection framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[52] OFSTED, School Inspection Handbook, April 2024, Section 326, [Internet] Available at :School inspection handbook - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Section 326



holistic spiritual human being. An understanding of difference removes any tendency towards bullying.

- As members of a Church school community grow in their full humanity, all can be expected to be treated well. It is unthinkable that a Church school's vision, when effectively shaping the life of the school, could tolerate bullying. All should be treated well in a Church school, and all should *know* that they are being treated well.
- As each person relaxes in the knowledge and experience of being treated well, they build on it and develop the confidence and ability to reach out to and on behalf of others. This reaching out subsequently grows into advocacy in which being treated well becomes a larger, more universal, language and set of behaviours. The benefits spread; and bullying is nowhere to be seen.
- A crucial part of understanding difference and diversity, and of eradicating bullying, is knowledge of other people's religious beliefs and practices. From such knowledge grows understanding. Therefore, an effective, well-taught religious education curriculum is an essential feature of a school in which human beings grow to neither bully nor to be bullied.

During a SIAMS inspection, inspectors will need to gather evidence to ensure that they understand how the Christian vision creates an environment in which all are valued and are treated with dignity and respect. They will also seek evidence as to whether all *know* that they are treated with dignity and respect.

Furthermore, inspectors are likely to need to refer to the school's anti-bullying policy and any inclusivity, diversity, or equality policies. This is to enable them to understand how the school translates the above theory into a daily reality for all.

Inspectors understand that each school will have its own system for establishing and sustaining a culture that is free from bullying, and that it may interpret bullying differently to a neighbouring school. They also understand that guidance will vary from region to region, from diocese to diocese.

Inspectors do not make judgements based on the detail of the methodology employed by any school. Rather, they evaluate the *effectiveness* of schools' systems to protect all pupils from bullying and to ensure that they flourish without fear or hindrance.

5. How this suite of guidance works: an intersectional approach

This suite of guidance is designed to enable Church schools to understand how to tackle bullying towards pupils and adults on the basis of different characteristics, ensuring this emanates from their Christian vision for the flourishing of all. Whilst each section looks at a particular characteristic specifically, there will need to be an understanding of how these characteristics interact with one another, and the cumulative effect multiple characteristics can have.

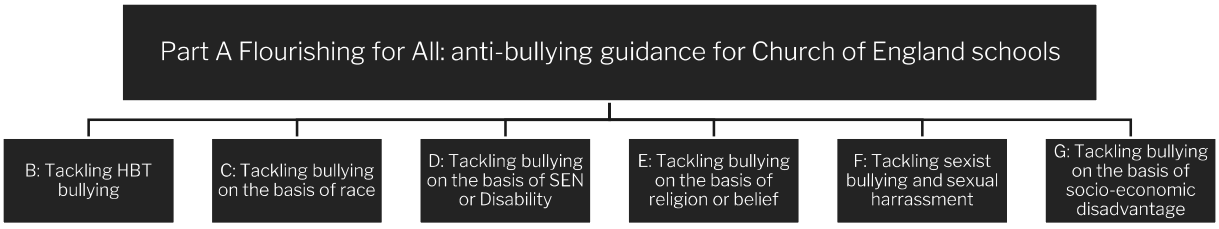
5.1 Intersectionality

It is vital to pay careful attention to the cumulative impact of discrimination and bullying on young people. Where a young person has more than one characteristic on the basis of which they can

experience discrimination and exclusion, they are more likely to be bullied. For example, a lesbian young person who is also of South Asian heritage is more likely to be exposed to more occurrences of bullying behaviour. An LGB/GQ pupil who has race or disability and/or free school meals as a factor, is likely to be significantly disadvantaged. This layering or cumulation of identities which can experience discrimination is sometimes called 'intersectionality'. 'We are all marginalised or privileged by the intersection of multiple aspects of our personal characteristics and identities such as class, religion, ethnicity.'[53] Therefore, schools must be aware of and adjust their strategies to take account of the cumulative impact on children, young people and adults who experience multiple forms of discrimination.

Schools must be proactive in creating an environment where those who are most likely to be disempowered via intersectionality are given special attention and are proactively protected from bullying.

Whilst each section of *Flourishing for All* looks at a different specific characteristic on its own, since there are particularities to each type of bullying which need addressing individually, the intention is that the combined suite of guidance will enable schools to think more holistically about how different characteristics overlap and combine.



5.2 Proposed Timeline for Publication

Section of the Resource:	Expected Publication Date:
Part A Introduction	Autumn Term 2024
Part B HBT Bullying	Autumn Term 2024
Part C Bullying on the basis of race	Spring Term 2025
Part D Bullying on the basis of SEN or Disability	Summer Term 2025
Part E Bullying on the basis of Religion or Belief	Summer Term 2025
Part F Sexist Bullying, Sexual Harassment and VAWG	Autumn 2025
Part G Bullying on the basis of socio-economic disadvantage	Autumn 2025

[53] University of Oxford, Anti-Racism Resources March 2023: Intersectionality of Privilege, March 2023, [Internet], Available at : Anti-Racism Resources March 2023: Intersectionality of Privilege — Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics (DPAG) (ox.ac.uk)

6. Part A Conclusion

In 2016, the Church of England Vision for Education stated:

'Among issues especially relevant to dignity in education are safeguarding, prevention of bullying, special educational needs and disabilities. Ensuring our children are kept safely from harm and educated in an environment where all God's children are valued ***is of the highest priority*** *and highlighted in our work on the prevention of homophobic bullying. Special educational needs and disabilities are often associated with shame, humiliation and lack of self-worth. We see it as vital for the health of our whole educational system that we do well with regard to both issues, and we will search out and spread good practice.'*[54]

This suite of documents represents the National Society for Education (NSE)'s renewed commitment to this priority. Where we have previously spoken specifically into one area of anti-bullying, namely HBT bullying, through the 2014 document Valuing All God's Children,[55] this suite of documents moves beyond the focus on one particularly at-risk group, to include similarly vulnerable groups of pupils and adults within our schools. For example, since 2020, the NSE has intensified its efforts to see racial justice work in schools across the country; through its trailblazing *Leaders Like Us* training programme, it is working to increase the representation of UKME/GMH leaders in schools exponentially.[56] However, alongside this must be a commitment to deal ever more decisively with racism in schools. Additionally, through its Networks and Programmes, the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership has been drawing together experts and school leaders to collaborate around one of the most pressing needs of schools today: provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Again, the high rates of disabled pupils who are victims of bullying must be addressed in tandem with this work.

As national leaders in Religious Education, working across faith groups and a range of religious and non-religious worldviews, we have a specific responsibility to speak out about faith-based bullying (to be addressed in Part E). Working in partnership across the National Church Institutions (NCIs) and with the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team, we are deeply committed to addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) and enabling schools to ensure consistently positive and healthy messaging about females across all demographics. Moreover, as the National Society for Education – founded to ensure safe, educational settings for the poorest in society – it is within our very DNA to ensure we are addressing issues around Child Poverty and bullying on the basis of socio-economic disadvantage.

As the resource grows, you will see a range of training opportunities and resources which come alongside the documents to help you implement these in your schools.

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[54] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 12 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

[55] Church of England, Valuing All God's Children, July 2019, [Internet], Available at : https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/valuing-all-gods-children-july-2019_0.pdf

[56] Church of England, Leaders like Us, [Internet], Available at : Leaders Like Us - Foundation For Educational Leadership (cefel.org.uk)

There is much to be proud of in our Church schools; protection of the most vulnerable is a key legacy from the foundation of Church schools in 1811. Over 200 years later, many of our schools are still leading the way, with their Christian vision for the flourishing of all. We hope that these documents encourage, guide and support you in all you do to make that a reality.

September 2024

Part B: Guidance for preventing and tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying

Every school is required to keep each of its pupils safe and should protect all its members from harm and enable them to flourish. The impact of this extends to the adults in the school and also to those in the wider community. In a Church of England school this will require 'special attention to the marginalised…' [57], ensuring that the voices of those who are most vulnerable are listened to, acted upon and centred in all decision-making processes. Schools must do this lawfully, following the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, and utilising the advice of government and the inspectorate, to ensure that legal requirements are met. They must ensure they provide physical and psychological safety, which enable the high-quality learning all our pupils need to take place.

Part B of *Flourishing for All – Anti-bullying Guidance for Church of England Schools* deals specifically with how to protect from harm pupils who are (or perceived to be) lesbian, gay or bisexual as well as those who are gender questioning and those who may have already socially transitioned.[58] It also looks at how to deal with bullying towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender adults within a school's community. Throughout the document, we will speak about 'LGB/GQ pupils' (lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or gender questioning) or 'pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ'. This follows the language used by the Department for Education in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)'. [59] In recognition that gender reassignment remains a protected characteristic in the Equalities Act 2010, we refer to adults in the document as LGBT+ or transgender. This document also acknowledges that some pupils are bullied because they appear to be LGB/GQ, and some adults because they appear to be LGBT+, regardless of whether that is in fact accurate.

Part B Executive Summary

- Every LGB/GQ pupil and LGBT+ adult has innate worth as made in the image of God and must therefore be treated with the same dignity and respect as their peers.
- Pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ are at higher risk of being bullied at their schools. This includes Church schools.
- Gender questioning children and transgender adults are at the highest risk of bullying and therefore need particular pastoral support and protection.

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53 David F Ford and Andy Wolfe, Called, Collected, Committed, [internet] February 2020, Page 26, Available at https://cofefoundation.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Called_Connected_Committed_-_David_Ford_and_Andy_Wolfe.pdf

58 This document recognises that although both the DfE and Cass Review caution against social transition, some pupils in schools may have already transitioned and guidance is therefore needed to ensure these pupils are supported and protected.

59 Gov.uk Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2024, [Internet] Available at: Keeping children safe in education 2024 (publishing.service.gov.uk), p55



- Churches and their clergy, governors, parents/ carers and faith communities have an important role to play in working with the school to ensure pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ are protected from harm.
- Although there are different viewpoints on human sexuality and gender identity within the Church of England, as well as in other faith communities and society at large, it is never acceptable for LGB/GQ pupils or LGBT+ adults to be bullied at school.
- Church schools must be proactive in tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying.[60]
- Church schools should ensure their school culture sends a clear message of welcome and inclusion to LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults, together with explicit communication about the unacceptability of HBT bullying.
- Teaching and activities designed to prevent and tackle HBT bullying need to be age appropriate.
- Church schools must deal decisively with any HBT bullying incidents, utilising the challenge, report, support framework.
- Diocesan boards of education have an important role to play in supporting and advising their Church schools to navigate any challenges they face in dealing with HBT bullying.

Note: This document is provided to support schools in their legal and pastoral duties towards their pupils and school community. To that end, the advice offered and the language used in this document is designed to sit alongside guidance provided by the Department for Education, Ofsted and other statutory bodies. Schools will need to understand and comply with current statutory expectations (such as those outlined in Part A),[61] and should take account of guidance documents which pertain to this area. At the time of publication in September 2024, the guidance pertaining to Gender Questioning Children (2023), and the updated RHSE guidance (2024) remain in draft, and schools should regard them thus.[62] Additionally, schools will need to be mindful of reports beyond the education sector which are specifically relevant to their care for children and young people who are LGB/GQ.[63] As statutory and non-statutory guidance is finalized and updated, this document will be reviewed to reflect any changes required.

Part B sets out guidance for Church schools in order to enable them to prevent and tackle HBT bullying; it is not intended for any other purpose.

Quotes included in the document are taken from a May 2024 survey of Church of England secondary school pupils by the NSE.

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[60] Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying are the terms used to describe bullying which is motivated by prejudice, intolerance or hate of children or young people who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ or LGBT+ adults.

[61] Including Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk); Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[62] For example the draft guidance on Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance (education.gov.uk) and Age limits introduced to protect children in RSHE - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[63] Including Final Report – Cass Review (independent-review.uk)

1. Why is it important for Church schools to address bullying towards LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults?

As outlined in Part A, bullying of any kind can have devastating effects on the personal wellbeing, identity-formation and self-esteem of any child or young person. This in turn has a significant impact on academic and vocational achievement, and on the wider flourishing of each person. Data shows that pupils who are (or perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning are particularly at risk of bullying in school.[64] Despite progress in legislation to protect LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults, there continue to be tragic examples of bullying, harm and hate towards them and, in the very worst circumstances, the death of young people who have identified as (or have been perceived to be) LGB/GQ. Studies indicate that almost half of pupils who are LGB/GQ feel unsafe at school, and are around twice as likely as their peers to be bullied. Pupils with additional protected characteristics, such as those with a disability or those from UKME/GMH backgrounds are even more likely to experience bullying. [6566]

We know that 'the mental health consequences [of bullying] can be severe and long-lasting.'[67] For pupils who are LGB/GQ, the effects of HBT bullying can have a significant effect on their lives for years to come, including tragically leading to self-harm and contemplating suicide in a significant number of cases.[68]

The need to avoid bullying and hostile environments can manifest in school avoidance and low attendance rates, which in turn have a significant impact on the achievement and outcomes of pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ. This can have a lasting effect on their life chances and future opportunities for work and financial stability.[69]

Studies in a range of countries show that young people are more likely to experience homophobic bullying at school than in the home or community. [70] Since 2014, *Valuing All God's Children* has had a significant impact for good in Church of England schools, raising the profile and addressing the issue of bullying towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ and adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+. It has provided school leaders with the confidence to challenge bullying towards LGB/GQ pupils, giving them language, theological underpinning and a clear rationale for this work. This new

[64] Anti Bullying Alliance, Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying , [Internet] Available at : Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)
[65] Ibid
[66] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying (UNESCO, 2012), p16.
[67] Cowie H, Myers C. School Bullying and Mental Health. Routledge 2018, p3.
[68] Ibid p38
[69] Peer Bullying Victimization Trajectories for Sexually and Gender Diverse Youth from Early Childhood to Late Adolescence | Journal of Youth and Adolescence (springer.com); Bullying Victimization among LGBTQ Youth: Current and Future Directions - PMC (nih.gov)
[70] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying (UNESCO, 2012), p16.



document replaces Valuing All God's Children and seeks to build on its work to ensure that Church schools continue to be robust in tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

Within the Church of England there is a wide spectrum of understanding about human sexuality and gender questioning, and within a school community many different views may be held too. It is acknowledged that this is a sensitive topic. However, this does not negate the absolute necessity to combat bullying of any type, including bullying towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ or adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+, in order to create an inclusive school environment where all pupils and adults can flourish. This guidance starts from the position that each person is made in the image of God, and therefore worthy of honour, value and protection from harm. Moreover, there is a particularly strong mandate for Church of England schools – established in 1811 to provide free access to education and to keep safe some of the country's most disadvantaged children – to protect the most at risk and vulnerable pupils in society. Where evidence indicates that certain pupils, or groups of pupils, are at higher risk of bullying, discrimination or harm at school, it is our responsibility to ensure that Church schools are proactive in guarding against and addressing these types of bullying. Addressing HBT bullying proactively and effectively must take precedence over debates around human sexuality and gender that can be found within the Church of England and beyond. As the Archbishop of Canterbury phrased it: 'there are no problems here, simply people.'[71]

The aim of this guidance is to prevent pupils in Church schools who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ from having their self-worth diminished or their ability to achieve impeded by being bullied. It aims to protect them from social exclusion, prejudice and harmful behaviours. It is important to note that this kind of bullying and language can affect all pupils, as well as school staff, regardless of whether they are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, gender questioning or transgender. This guidance challenges Church schools to ensure that they work towards a consistently welcoming culture for all pupils under the gospel mandate to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:31).

2. What kind of bullying is experienced by LGB/GQ pupils, and LGBT+ adults ?

2.1 HBT Bullying

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are the terms used to describe bullying which is motivated by prejudice, intolerance or hate of LGB/GQ children and young people or LGBT+ adults. It can also apply to children and young people who are perceived to be LGB/GQ or adults who are perceived to be LGBT+, even if they are not . Transphobic bullying can affect transgender adults, as well as people who identify as non-binary, pupils who are gender-questioning, pupils who have already

[71] Church of England, Letter from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York following General Synod, February 2017, [Internet] Available at : Letter from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York following General Synod | The Church of England



socially transitioned at school and pupils who are not gender questioning, but who do not conform to gender stereotypes and social norms.

2.1.1 Use of Language

HBT bullying will thrive in environments where it is not challenged. It is therefore important to identify what HBT bullying is, and what it isn't.

Younger children may be particularly curious about things which are as yet unfamiliar to them, and who may want to ask questions about things they don't understand, such as:

- A young person who doesn't conform to gender norms which may relate to how they cut or style their hair, or the clothes they wear
- Different sorts of family compositions, both within their school community or encountered through stories

It is important to respond warmly towards conversations which demonstrate curiosity, and nurture a child's development in meaning-making. Research shows that when children feel safe to make observations about the world around them, they both grasp key messages about themselves (which boosts self-esteem) and also learn how to 'deal well with difference' (reducing the likelihood that they will want to bully others).[72] Children's curiosity, when handled well, can also provide an opportunity to teach accurate and positive usage of language in an age appropriate way.

In contrast, schools **must** challenge remarks which are:

- Derogatory (i.e. intending to put another person down)
- Outdated terms. Where these are used accidentally, the school has a clear role to play in educating the pupils and adults who use them.
- Indiscriminate and which present being a LGB/GQ pupil or LGBT+ adult negatively (e.g. indiscriminate use of the word 'gay' to describe things we don't like)
- Dehumanising (i.e. devaluing a person or treating them as worthless)

When challenging this kind of language, it is vital to be clear that such language cannot be considered as merely 'banter'. A joke is only a joke if both people are laughing, and even then, a person may 'laugh off' or dismiss hurtful behaviour because they are not ready to challenge it, feel unable to challenge it or are so used to it that they are desensitised. Therefore, schools need to focus on the sort of culture they want to create and be clear that this kind of behaviour or language is never acceptable in their environments. They do not need to seek the permission of the pupil in question (who may be traumatised by a range of discriminatory experiences) before intervening and challenging the

[72] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 12, [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

behaviour. Often, if a pupil is being bullied they will resist intervention for fear of reprisal, so it is incumbent on the school to advocate for them and act.

Our survey of pupils found that:[73]

> Pupils said they were aware of people being bullied 'just for the fun of it' and that some people 'made up rumours... thinking it is funny'.

We should expect pupils of all ages to use kind words with their peers. It is therefore important to challenge harmful and discriminatory language or behaviour at any age. Otherwise, pupils grow up believing that it is acceptable to treat children and young people who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ or adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+ this way. Schools are very skilled at teaching children that harming another person with words or actions is unacceptable in a completely age-appropriate way. They are able to do this without going beyond the expectations laid out within the draft government Relationships Health and Sex Education (RHSE) guidance (which allows for exceptions to the specified ages at which subjects can be introduced on the basis of safeguarding, as long as parents are informed).[74] Remaining silent on the topic, or avoiding it, can send a hurtful message to LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults.

Tackling the use of unacceptable language towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ or adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+ extends beyond pupils to the adults within the school community. This can include school staff, parents/ carers or members of the wider community who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+. For example, pupils in the school may have parents/ carers who are LGBT+. It is important that pupils are challenged if they use discriminatory language towards the adults in their community. This is equally true for the adults in the community, since they provide a model of how to behave for the pupils and set the culture of the school. As such, bullying behaviour by adults towards an LGBT+ member of staff, parent or figure in the community should be dealt with as HBT bullying. It is crucial to be clear that bullying and discrimination towards *any* member of the school community is unacceptable. Where this is coming from a member of staff, this should be dealt with through the school's disciplinary procedures; where this is from a parent or visitor to the school towards a member of staff, or on school premises, towards another adult, this should be addressed by the school leadership to ensure there is clarity that this is not acceptable.

[73] NSE Survey of Church secondary school pupils, May 2024
[74] Gov.uk, Age limits introduced to protect children in RSHE, May 2024, [Internet] Available at : Age limits introduced to protect children in RSHE - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

2.1.2 Online/ Cyber bullying

A relatively recent but serious phenomena impacting the lives of children and young people is the pervasive influence of smartphones and the impact of their use on wellbeing and mental health.[75] This has repercussions across all the areas that will be considered in this suite of documents.

Cyberbullying is a prevalent form of bullying towards children and young people who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ. Around a quarter of children and young people who are LGB/GQ are reported to have experienced cyberbullying.[76] Cyberbullying occurs online, predominantly through social networks, instant messaging, picture/video messaging and email. It can involve the posting or sending of abusive messages directly to victims, as well as sharing messages, videos or images to spread rumours and comments among a peer group. Due to the anonymity that social media affords, it can be very difficult to identify and permanently stop people from sending HBT bullying messages and offensive materials to LGB/GQ young people. As a result, they can feel under attack in what should be a safe space, such as their own home. Depending on how far they have shared their sexual orientation or gender questioning, it may be particularly difficult for them to report that this is occurring. This can have a profoundly negative impact on a person and significantly damage their mental and emotional wellbeing. Some LGB/GQ young people may rely on social media to connect with other young people who share the same or similar identity as themselves.[77] To this end, social media and the internet can be a lifeline for LGB/GQ young people, especially if they are from small communities where they are both a minority and hyper-visible. Therefore, to experience bullying in this forum can increase their vulnerability by inserting a highly fearful element into what can often be a vital and extremely valuable space.

As Part A of *Flourishing for All* explains, schools should have clear policies about mobile device usage in school. They should also ensure they help inform pupils and their parents about the potential dangers and impact of smartphones on their mental wellbeing, including their use in cyberbullying.

2.1.3 Physical bullying

Physical harm continues to be a very real experience for some pupils who are (or perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning.[78] As with any child or adult, physical harm must never be tolerated. It might take the form of repeated tripping, spitting, hitting or kicking – often in low visibility areas. This can happen both on school grounds, or outside of school (e.g. on the journey home). Schools have the power to challenge and act on this behaviour, whether it happens at school or beyond the school gates, and it is essential that they do so.

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[75] Cyberbullying and Children and Young People's Mental Health: A Systematic Map of Systematic Reviews | Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking (liebertpub.com)
[76] Cowie H, Myers C. School Bullying and Mental Health. Routledge 2018, p36.
[77] NSPCC, Safeguarding LGBTQ+ children and young people, [Internet] Available at : Safeguarding LGBTQ+ children and young people | NSPCC Learning
[78] Ibid

2.1.4 Sexual Harassment and Child-on-Child Abuse

'Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex from primary to secondary stage and into colleges. It can also occur online. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.'[79] Evidence indicates that young people who are LGB/GQ are at higher risk of sexual harm than other young people, and therefore require tailored pastoral care and protection from their school.[80]

It is important to ensure that staff realise and are aware that pupils who are LGB/GQ can be subjected to all forms of child-on child abuse and are intentional about safeguarding them.

2.2 Bullying towards Gender Questioning Children and Transgender Adults

Within our schools, we know that there are pupils who are questioning their gender. Whilst the recently released DfE draft guidance 'Gender Questioning Children' (2023)[81] advises how schools should respond to pupils who are gender questioning both now and in the future, we recognise that there are pupils in school who have already socially transitioned and are now presenting as a different gender to their biological sex. Additionally, there are transgender adults amongst the adults (e.g. staff or parents/ carers) within our school communities.

It is vital that these members of our school communities are treated with the utmost dignity and respect, and are protected decisively from harm. This protection includes ensuring that they are kept safe from polarised debates about the care or place of gender questioning children and transgender people in society. This is absolutely essential in order to uphold and preserve the psychological safety of this highly at-risk group.

To this end, Church schools should ensure their classrooms are places of constant nurture and compassion: where all are treated with dignity, where differences are appreciated and respected, and where all are provided with the utmost standard of care and protection. This includes gender questioning children and transgender adults.

Consequently, schools must challenge:

- Discriminatory and dehumanising language towards gender questioning children, those who have already socially transitioned and transgender adults
- Repeated mis-naming which is deliberate and intended to cause harm[82]

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[79] Department for Education, Keeping children safe in education, 2023, [Internet] Available at : Keeping children safe in education 2023 (publishing.service.gov.uk) p15
[80] NSPCC research cites Barnardo's and Fox, 2016; McGeeney et al, 2017; Xu and Zheng, 2014
[81] Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance (education.gov.uk)
[82] Page 13 in Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance (education.gov.uk) states that bullying must not be tolerated, and distinguishes this from 'honest mistakes'. In order to not cause harm by using a pronoun which a child does not identify with, schools are encouraged to use names instead. Informal name changes are permitted.



- Any physical harm or sexual harassment
- Cyberbullying towards a child or young person because they are gender questioning or an adult who is transgender

Additionally, Church schools should make every effort to ensure that when following the government's draft guidance and making any of the alternative arrangements specified for gender questioning pupils (such as individual changing rooms, toilets and showers in school or sleeping arrangements on residential trips), they are careful not to do so in a way that reinforces any sense of exclusion a pupil may feel by being singled out. As the Vision for Education states, we are to follow the example of Jesus who 'paid special attention to the… excluded.'[83]

Under current government guidance, schools are advised to undertake a period of 'watchful waiting' following any request from a gender questioning child or young person to socially transition at school.[84] If a school follows this path, it is critical that the school proactively engages with the child or young person so they know they have been heard, and ensures that they are kept safe from any harm or bullying behaviours by making planned and regular checks. They should not wait for bullying to be reported, but understand this is a particularly vulnerable time for that child or young person. Whenever possible, this should include working with the child or young person's family (unless to do so would place the child or young person at risk).

There is evidence that bullying instances against gender questioning children and transgender adults are extremely high. As Part A of *Flourishing for All* explains, hate crime has risen exponentially over the last ten years in the UK. In 2022-23, transgender hate crime had increased by 11% compared to the previous year.[85] Given that not all LGB/GQ children and young people or LGBT+ adults feel safe enough to report discrimination or harm, it is likely that the reality is even higher than this. It is therefore important for all pupils, growing up in a society where harm towards people who are transgender is increasing, to be supported by their school to be respectful to those who are questioning their gender, and to those who have transitioned.

2.3 Bullying towards LGBT+ adults

Every adult in a Church school community should feel safe to be able to fully participate in the life of the school. Within school communities there will be members of staff who feel able to be open about being in a same-sex marriage or partnership, their sexuality or gender identity. As is the case for all staff, any personal information that is shared with pupils should be age-appropriate.

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[83] The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 11, [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

[84] Department for Education, Gender Questioning Children, 2023, Page 10, [Internet], Available at : Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance (education.gov.uk)

[85] Gov.uk, Hate Crime, England and Wales 2022-2023, 2023, [Internet] Available at : Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Schools may also have members of the parent body who are open about being part of the LGBT+ community. Increasingly, this will include the parents or carers of looked after and adopted pupils. In Part A of *Flourishing for All*, the importance of enabling adults to flourish if we want to see pupils fully flourish is addressed. It is vital, both for the wellbeing of the adults themselves and for the messages this sends to pupils, that any HBT bullying behaviour towards adults is tackled thoroughly.

Due to the social justice work in the UK that has led to legal safeguards and formal protection for LGBT+ people over the last 50 years, LGBT+ adults enjoy greater freedom and acceptance in modern Britain.[86] However, bullying and harm towards LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults continues both in society at large, and sadly, within schools – including Church schools. It is therefore important that Church schools are explicit and transparent in their approach to tackling bullying behaviour towards the LGBT+ adults in their communities, along with their pupils.

3. What are the particular challenges of addressing HBT bullying in Church of England schools?

In the case of tackling bullying towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ and adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+ in our schools , there are added complexities for Church schools. Parents/ carers and others within the community who are involved in the life of the school (such as, but not limited to, clergy) might hold particular faith-based beliefs relating to this subject which they may expect to see upheld or reinforced by the school. This can be exacerbated by debates about human sexuality and gender taking place within the wider church. This can cause some children, young people and adults to feel more vulnerable within a Church of England space.

It is important to note that even in the context of these debates taking place, and the often strongly held views being expressed on all sides, there remains a clear commitment by the Church of England to eradicate bullying and harm caused to those who are LGBTQI+. In February 2017, following a debate in the General Synod of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury stated: 'No person is a problem, or an issue. People are made in the image of God. All of us, without exception, are loved and called in Christ. There are no 'problems', there are simply people… *The way forward needs to be about love, joy and celebration of our humanity; of our creation in the image of God, of our belonging to Christ – all of us, without exception, without exclusion."*[87]

[86] Such as the removal of Section 28, Gay Christian movement of the 1970s, lifting the ban on lesbians, gay men and bi people serving in the armed forces, equality in the age of consent, the Civil Partnership Act and the introduction of The Equality Act.

[87] Archbishop of Canterbury : Statement from the Archbishop of Canterbury following today's General Synod, 2017, [Internet] Available at : Statement from the Archbishop of Canterbury following today's General Synod | The Archbishop of Canterbury

Later that year, General Synod passed a motion on welcoming and affirming transgender people in their parish church.[88]

More recently, in February 2023, the General Synod 'voted to "lament and repent" of the failure of the Church to welcome 'LGBTQI+ people' and for the harm that LGBTQI+ people have experienced – and continue to experience – in churches.'[89]

Flourishing for All represents the continued action and commitment that the NSE is taking to support schools in eradicating bullying towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ or adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+. Church schools, with their legal and statutory duties to safeguard and protect their pupils should be at the forefront of the efforts to address HBT bullying, and should be exemplars of how to eliminate harm towards LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults .

We must remember that all schools, including Church schools, are required to create safe cultures in which all pupils can effectively learn and flourish. Church schools are established with a Christian foundation and should have a theologically rooted Christian vision. It is extremely important to recognise that Church of England schools educate those of all faiths and none, including those with very varied understandings of Christian teaching on a range of subjects. In order to do this, a school will need to teach pupils how to respect different viewpoints, disagree well in their interactions and understand that families and individuals can hold beliefs that differ from one another yet still live together well.

3.1 Learning to live with difference

In any Church school it is likely that not all will agree on matters of human sexuality, marriage and gender identity. It is possible to love and respect people who hold different views and opinions about sexuality and gender identity (just as we would expect pupils to respect and honour those with different religious and faith perspectives to their own) without engaging in, or ignoring, bullying behaviour towards a pupil who is LGB/GQ or towards an LGBT+ adult.

Just as sexual orientation and gender assignment are protected characteristics, so is faith and belief. Therefore, a school will need to work with their community – including the church, parent body and a range of faith communities – to ensure differences of faith and belief are understood, so that no one feels excluded.

Our *Vision for Education* should lead us to relentlessly pursue safety, belonging and flourishing for *all* the pupils and adults in our schools (see Part A for a fuller explanation of this). For pupils who are LGB/GQ or beginning to wonder whether they might be, schools will need to be particularly mindful of managing the different views people hold in order to safeguard their wellbeing. It is not appropriate in

[88] Church of England, Welcoming Transgender People, 2017, [Internet], Available at : Welcoming Transgender People | The Church of England

[89] Church of England, Prayers for God's blessing for same-sex couples take step forward after Synod debate, 2023, [Internet], Available at : Prayers for God's blessing for same-sex couples take step forward after Synod debate | The Church of England



a school setting for views which denigrate or harm LGBT+ people to be shared with pupils, just as it is not acceptable to be racist.

In order to do this, a key starting point is learning throughout their schooling how to explore issues around difference safely, within a supportive environment. Difference for Schools[90] is a free short course that has been developed for primary and secondary school pupils and aims to address the complexities and divisions of our society by equipping young people with the tools to navigate difference, disagreement and fracture.

These materials promote three habits to transform everyday relationships:

- Being Curious (listen to others' stories and see the world through their eyes)
- Being Present (encounter others with authenticity and confidence)
- Reimagining (Finding hope and opportunity in places where we long to see change)

We may never know the fullness of what LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults have experienced, but by seeking to listen, learn and understand what life has been like for them, we can foster the ethic of care and compassion which should be at the heart of all our schools. Developing the habits of being able to navigate difference well will prepare pupils for the occasions when exploring different views on gender and sexuality arise, to ensure this is only ever done safely and empathetically.

In the Early Years and primary phases, there would not usually be a reason for differences in viewpoint around sexuality and gender to be discussed in the classroom. Discussions will need to be held (as in all phases) at an adult level, for example at a governing board meeting, a staff INSET around HBT bullying or in a parents' meeting where aspects of the schools work are explained. Staff and governors should be trained to navigate these respectfully.

Within the secondary Personal, Social, Heath and Economic Education (PSHE) and/or Religious Education (RE) curriculum, there will be opportunities for the breadth of views amongst pupils and the community to be acknowledged. Pupils should already be equipped to handle difference well before this is introduced to them. Any discussion on the range of viewpoints people may hold about sexual orientation and gender identity should be thoroughly planned as part of the school's curriculum and not be entered into in an ad hoc way. This planning should involve members of the LGBT+ community as well as church and faith groups.

When handling controversial issues in a classroom or even a parent or governors' consultation, Professor Trevor Cooling's metaphor of a Bedouin 'tent of meeting' may be a helpful model for Church schools. This strategy asks teachers or facilitators to host a space where different views can be aired and honoured: 'a place of hospitality, welcome and respectful engagement, sacred and

[90] Church of England, Difference, [Internet] Available at : Secondary Schools - Difference: Make your faith count in a complex and divided world (rln.global) see also Difference for Primary Schools - Difference: Make your faith count in a complex and divided world (rln.global)

mutual, but not neutral to its own Christian values, whilst being genuinely open to the free expression of engagement'.[91]

Part of these discussions will be making the distinction between what is appropriate to discuss in the classroom and the role of parents/ carers, churches and other faith communities in forming and explaining personal beliefs outside of school.

3.2 The Church-School relationship

Church schools should experience a meaningful and reciprocal relationship with their parish church, bringing mutual benefit to the church, school and wider community. This relationship will often extend to other churches in the locality. A school should undertake its best endeavours to foster a good relationship with its parish church where possible, and vice versa.

As already acknowledged, within a school's locality there may be churches and clergy holding a breadth of views on many issues. This breadth of views may come into a sharper focus during debates about gender and sexuality in the wider church. For example, as part of the *Living in Love and Faith* process, the Church of England has recently discussed the use of prayers to be used with same-sex couples. These resources, known as *Prayers of Love and Faith*, have been commended by the House of Bishops for use by licensed ministers. However not everyone will agree how they should be used or want to use them. School leaders should recognise the existence of these different positions within the Church of England.

All relationships between schools and their parish churches and clergy should be built on mutual trust and understanding. This means that clergy and churches will need to understand and respect the context in which the school works and the particular legal and pastoral responsibilities which schools exercise towards their pupils, staff and other stakeholders.

For the times when a school may need to navigate different viewpoints (e.g. in a governing board meeting, for example), the Pastoral Principles developed as part of the *Living in Love and Faith* process provide a framework for good disagreement[92]:



[91] Cooling, Trevor, Doing God in Education, Page 66, Theos, 2010
[92] Church of England, The Pastoral Principles, [Internet], Available at : The Pastoral Principles | The Church of England

Whilst ultimately statutory guidance and the law must take precedence over the range of views that exist locally, school leaders will need to manage these situations carefully. They will need to ensure a balance between enabling all parties to be heard whilst protecting those in their school community for whom listening to particular viewpoints on gender and sexuality can be painful. This includes ensuring that pupils and adults who hold a particular view, on the basis of their religious or non-religious worldview, understand that they are legally entitled to do so. In Church schools, the expectation would be that all views are expressed in line with the pastoral principles cited above. Where disagreements exist which require mediation or further support, a school should call upon the expertise within its Diocesan Board of Education.

3.2.1 Working with the clergy, para-church organisations and chaplains

Clergy may exercise several roles when working with schools, particularly if this is the school that is attached to their parish church. They may fulfil a pastoral role, serve as a school governor, be invited to lead Collective Worship and take part in supporting the delivery of the curriculum as an expert from the local Christian community.

Schools should have a clear written policy for visitors which *all* visitors, including clergy, should be asked to adhere to. They should also have written policies and plans for Collective Worship (CW), Religious Education (RE), Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and Relationships Sex and Health Education (RSHE). Policies for visiting speakers should also be in place, setting out how they can talk about their beliefs in ways which are not discriminatory or harmful to pupils and staff. These policies will be written in line with up-to-date legislation and the school's distinctive Christian vision, will be approved by the school's governing board, and will be scrutinised through the inspection process.

When supporting the delivery of the curriculum, clergy may find themselves discussing differences that exist within the Church. In these situations, careful use of language such as "some Christians believe", "other Christians believe" is more helpful when holding a range of views together than absolute language. However, it is critical that viewpoints which are homophobic, biphobic or transphobic are not presented since to do so would be harmful to both pupils and adults. Clergy should also be mindful that there may be a range of family groupings and relationships represented within the school community who should not be made to feel alienated, different or wrong. If a member of the clergy, or church representative, is unsure what is appropriate to share within a classroom or collective worship setting, they should always discuss this with the headteacher first and retain a very cautious approach. All interactions and explanations within the school context must conform to the expectations of Keeping Children Safe in Education, The Equality Act and the inspection frameworks under which a school will be judged (see Part A for more detail about each of these) and be age appropriate.

Schools who work with para-church organisations or Christian charities offering curriculum support should apply the same principles. A clear policy and guidance on expectations of external speakers can be essential tools in navigating this well. Schools should discuss how this area will be addressed



when entering into relationships with these organisations so that there is clarity on both sides right from the start.

Chaplains who work within a school context play a critical role in bridging the gap between school and church. They can provide essential pastoral support to pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ and adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+, particularly through challenging times. They can also support those in the community who are wrestling to reconcile their faith position with the school's activities around HBT bullying (for example, understanding why the school talks about different kinds of families or shares LGBT+ role models with the pupils). A chaplain's first responsibility will be to safeguard the pupils in the school, understanding that – regardless of their faith position on human sexuality and gender – each is innately precious as a child of God.

3.3 The Role of Governors

All governors should understand their duties under the relevant legislation. Role descriptions and codes of conduct (often linked to the Seven Principles of Public Life[93] and with reference to the Equality Act[94]) are useful to have in place and to revisit in times of disagreement and tension[95]. Some dioceses will have a governance support officer who can provide further assistance in navigating disagreements. Governors should exercise their role in terms of the public interest and should act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence available and without discrimination or bias.

It is the duty of governors to ensure strategic oversight of a school and to hold the staff to account for the implementation of school policies. This will include the school's approach to behaviour and the elimination of bullying, including HBT bullying. Foundation governors have an essential role and responsibility in ensuring that the school is run in accordance with its trust deed. This is an essential element in navigating the church-school partnership.

School trusts should be monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of governance in this area to ensure that their schools are robustly held to account regarding their tackling of HBT bullying. 'Central to the flourishing of any school trust is its love for each individual school's local community; a love which…enable[es] adults and children to flourish together… challenging injustice and celebrating diversity.'[96] This should include a strong commitment to ensuring that each school is protecting the pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ and adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+ within their community so that they feel safe, experience belonging and are given every chance to succeed academically.

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[93] Gov.uk, The Seven Principles of Public Life, [Internet], Available at : The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[94] Gov.uk, Equality Act 2010 Guidance, 2010, [Internet] Available at : Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[95] National Governance Association, Role Descriptions, [Internet], Available at : Role descriptions | National Governance Association (nga.org.uk) see also Role description: Trustee (cstuk.org.uk)
[96] Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing School System, p18 [Internet] 2023 Available at our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf (churchofengland.org)

Further information on the roles and duties of governors and trustees can be obtained from organisations such as the National Governance Association www.nga.org.uk and the Confederation of School Trusts www.cstuk.org.uk .

3.4 Working with parents and carers

Schools should work closely with their parents/ carers when developing and updating their approach to all forms of bullying, including HBT bullying. It is important that schools carefully explain their duties and responsibilities to provide a safe and nurturing environment which is free from bullying for all pupils. A school's strong approach to tackling all forms of bullying, including HBT bullying, should be clear in its written policies and day to day procedures which parents/ carers should be able to access on the school website. Schools may find it useful to include reference to this in their induction processes for new parents/ carers and pupils and to have this information available in community languages.

Schools may encounter parents/ carers and other community members who hold strong views about LGB/GQ inclusion and challenge the school's approach to HBT bullying. In these situations it is important for schools to clearly establish the duty placed upon them to provide a safe and nurturing environment, free from bullying, for all pupils alongside their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. It is important for parents/ carers to work in partnership with the school to help their children understand what it looks like to live well with difference. Just as a child may show curiosity about a classmate whose religious beliefs influence the way they dress or act, and be taught how to understand and respect this, so also should pupils learn to understand how to respect and understand pupils who are gender questioning or not conforming to gender stereotypes.

LGBT+ parents/ carers can bring useful insight to the development and revision of anti-bullying policies. It is also important to note that 1 in 5 adoptions are now by same-sex couples.[97] This has increased significantly since 2010 and therefore schools will find they have increasing numbers of LGBT+ parents/ carers. Schools should have regard to this when responding to the needs of care-experienced pupils as well as recognising the increasing presence of LGBT+ parents/ carers in school communities, since these pupils are already at increased risk of bullying.

Any concerns from parents/ carers about a school's approach to HBT bullying should be raised through the school's normal complaints procedures.

[97] Gov.uk, Children look after in England 2023, 2023, Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

3.5 Working with different faith communities

Church of England school communities will very often contain members of different world faith groups. Within these faith groups there may be a variety of opinions on human sexuality, marriage and gender identity.

When working with parents/ carers and pupils of different faith groups it is important to establish that while a variety of faith-based teaching on human sexuality, marriage and gender identity may exist, these cannot be used as justification for HBT bullying. Tolerance and respect for others are a basic principle of many faiths. It is helpful in these instances to find areas of agreement, such as the need to protect all children, young people and adults from harm as well as taking focusing on the dignity and inherent worth of each and every individual. Staff members and governors who are drawn from the diverse communities a school serves, and understand the school's approach to combatting bullying, can provide invaluable insight when addressing parental concerns. They can often act as a bridge between the school's leadership and potentially minoritised groups.

An example explanation of a school's preventative work around HBT bullying might begin with: 'Our Christian vision, as a Church school, begins with the understanding that all children and adults are made in the image of God. They are therefore extremely precious and we have a responsibility to protect them from any kind of harm. That means we have to send a clear message that our school is a safe place for everyone, including LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults. It also means that if anyone is bullied because they are LGB/GQ, or because someone thinks that they are, we must take serious action to deal with that."

Particular faith groups have produced their own guidance which schools may find helpful for supporting dialogue with the faith groups in their community. Liaising with particular faith groups and faith-specific education providers can be extremely helpful in navigating these conversations.

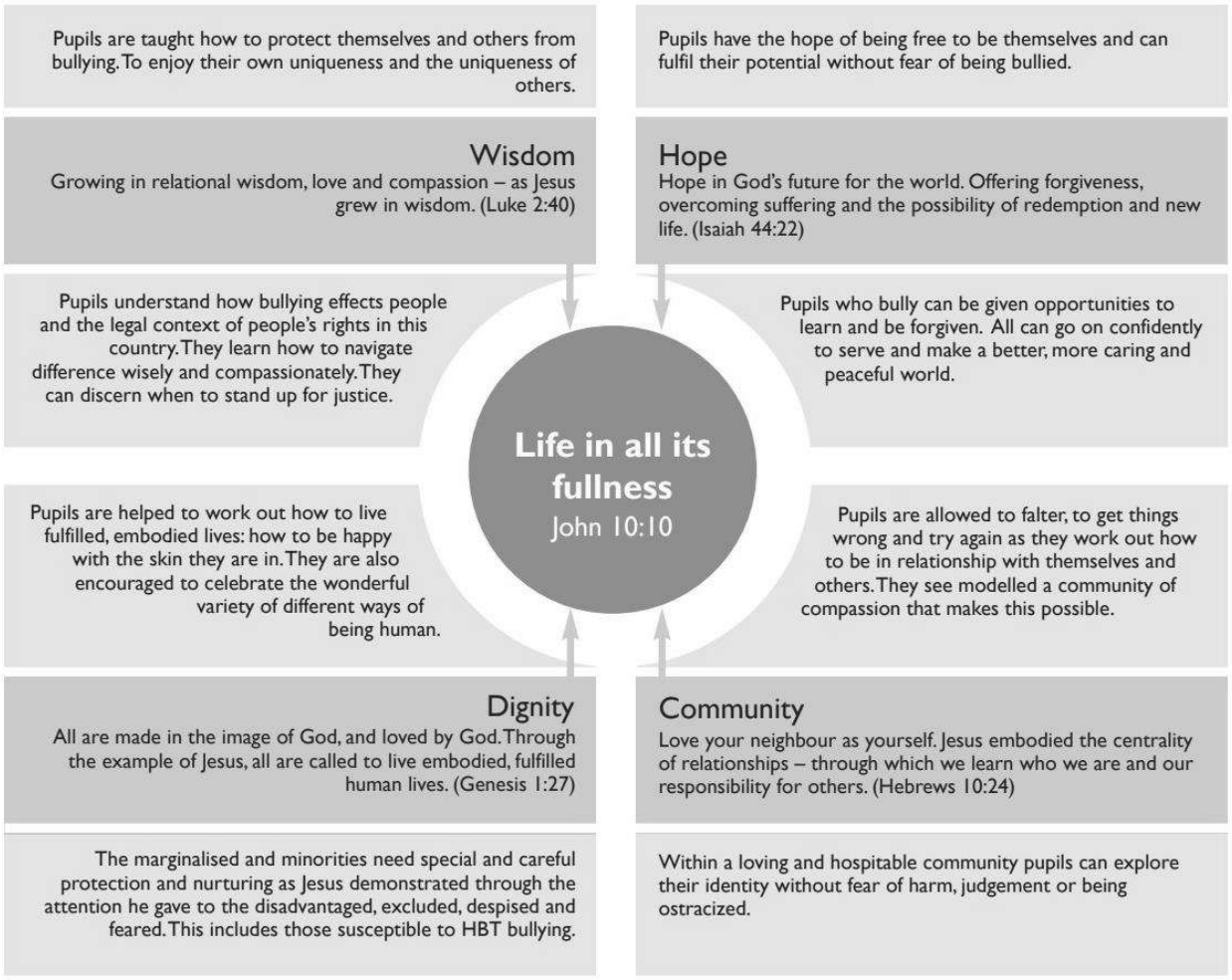
4. How should a Church school's Christian vision underpin its approach to HBT bullying?

As with all pupils, schools must view and treat every pupil who is (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ as having inherent value and infinite worth. Just like every other pupil, they are made in the image of God. Just like every other pupil, they must be protected from harm – particularly in the form of bullying. It is never acceptable for a child or young person to be bullied because of their sexual orientation or because they are questioning their gender.

Rather, a deeply Christian vision for education which serves the common good ensures that those who are at greatest risk of harm are given the highest priority. One of the greatest indicators of whether a school is truly living out its Christian vision will be how it treats its most vulnerable pupils.

'Flourishing can only happen when each and every child is treated with dignity'[98] and this must include every pupil who is (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ along with the adults who teach, support and surround them. Church schools should be standard carriers for inclusive practice, championing the disadvantaged and marginalised and demonstrating the highest possible standards of safeguarding and care. The 'life in all its fullness' described in Part A of *Flourishing for All* requires that this same standard is applied to those who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ.

This diagram provides some starting points around how the four domains of the Vision for Education can inform a Church school's work in tackling HBT bullying:



It is for each Church school to articulate how the specific work they are doing around HBT bullying emanates from their own Christian vision, within their local context.

[98] Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing School System, p9 [Internet] 2023 Available at our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf (churchofengland.org)



5. What do Church schools need to attend to in order to tackle HBT bullying effectively?

In order to ensure that HBT bullying has no place within a Church school, it is important to be both **proactive in creating a strong inclusive culture** where it is less likely that HBT bullying would take place, and at the same time to **have robust systems and procedures** for dealing with any HBT bullying incidents.

5.1 Preventing HBT Bullying

It is always preferable to try and create an environment which prevents HBT bullying first. There are definitive steps schools can take to help prevent bullying towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ or LGBT+ adults from occurring in the first place. Church schools should have strong cultures, driven by their Christian vision, which make it explicit to all stakeholders what is and isn't acceptable. This includes ensuring that pupils are clear about the school's expectations and procedures around anti-bullying. Creating an inclusive school environment that demonstrates equality and respect is an important measure in preventing and challenging HBT bullying. The way LGB/GQ pupils or LGBT+ adults are spoken about within a school is a critical factor regarding whether all pupils who are LGB/GQ feel recognised, respected and welcome. It is essential that in a Church school, all members of the community are valued as having inherent worth and dignity.

Human sexuality and gender identity are currently areas where there is no single opinion or understanding. Members of the school community might hold very different views and there may be tension on this subject in some schools, but this does not mean that matters and questions of sexuality, gender and gender identity should be passed over. Nor does it mean that it is acceptable for homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language or viewpoints to be shared within the school. Rather, schools should ensure they address these topics sensitively to create a culture of respect towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ. This has been proven to actively contribute towards the prevention of HBT bullying. No matter what the views of school community members, pupils must be protected and bullying must be challenged.[99]

Preventative measures should be embedded within the school's daily life, seeking to create a consistently welcoming and safe environment where everyone is valued, including pupils who are LGB/GQ and LGBT+ adults.

Such preventative strategies might include:

5.1.1 Policies and culture

- Creating robust anti-bullying policies which are communicated in appropriate and accessible formats to all stakeholders

[99] Anti Bullying Alliance, Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying , [Internet] Available at : Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)



- Creating a simple and clear framework for tackling HBT bullying specifically which is communicated to and discussed with all stakeholders
- Sending clear messages about bullying being unacceptable, and ensuring all stakeholders know how to speak up against HBT bullying
- Ensuring all pupils are aware of the positive contributions made by LGBT+ public and historic figures, in age appropriate ways
- Removing any negative presentations of LGBT+ people from the curriculum and replacing these with positive role models and language
- Making pupils aware of the existence of different types of families in our society (primary) and different kinds of relationships (secondary) which include LGBT+ people
- Providing staff with learning on LGBT+ topics and terminology. This empowers them to be able to talk confidently with and about young people who are LGB/GQ.
- Supporting staff to understand the cumulation of discrimination, intersectionality and trauma.
- Training staff to respond in the moment to HBT bullying.
- Actively seeking regular pupil voice which allows them to communicate concerns, ideas and perspectives which enable the school to respond, value contributions, invest in building trusting relationships and maintain an inclusive environment.
- Working to create a culture where difference is welcome and valued and pupils and staff are well-trained in navigating this well.
- Seeking collaboration and contributions from the local community including parents/ carers, and local faith groups

5.1.2 Explicit pastoral support

- Creating safe spaces for pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ to meet with peers with similar identities. This allows them to build trusting positive relationships and build psychological safety.
- Working to build trusting and good relations with young people who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ and their families
- Creating methods for the friends of young people who are LGB/GQ to be able to share concerns about their LGB/GQ friends. This recognises that an LGB/GQ young person may be more likely to confide in a friend than an adult. Given the increased risk of poor mental health, suicide and cyberbullying, providing specific and transparent methods for young people to share a concern about a friend is advisable.

- Supporting pastoral leads and staff to recognise signs of trauma in young people who identify as LGB/GQ
- Creating opportunities for young people who are LGB/GQ to talk about their futures and aspirations to instil and promote hope
- Ensuring relationships education promotes healthy relationships and sexual health for all pupils, including young people who are LGB/GQ, at age appropriate stages
- Sensitively offering new photographs for ID badges for anyone whose appearance changes radically
- Ensuring pastoral staff are well informed so they can signpost young people who are LGB/GQ to internal and external support in order to help them avoid seeking information and support from strangers online.
- Providing specific training to staff on how to respond if a young person chooses them to 'come out' to
- Working with parents/ carers and families to ensure partnership working which supports the child or young person in every aspect of their life

5.2 Responding to HBT Bullying

Unfortunately, despite the best preventative efforts of a school, HBT bullying still occurs frequently in schools. Therefore, it is important that schools have clear systems and processes in place to address HTB bullying when it happens.

When incidents of bullying happen towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ or towards LGBT+ adults, schools need to undertake three courses of action:



- challenging unacceptable behaviour, including setting standards of acceptable behaviour and reinforcing a culture of dignity and respect.
- supporting the pupil/ adult who has been bullied (and as appropriate, the pupil who has displayed bullying behaviour and any non-intervening bystanders).
- reporting what has happened and monitoring those reports.

5.2.1 Challenging

The school's anti-bullying policy and its specific HBT policy should be enacted quickly and robustly.



Schools should create a simple script or framework to support staff to address pupils who demonstrate HBT bullying behaviours, in an age appropriate manner.

Where HBT bullying happens in public, schools should find a way to communicate with onlookers and all participants in the behaviour that it is unacceptable, and reiterate the school's policy on inclusion, bullying and how to make people feel included, safe and valued.

Conversations about HBT bullying should be held with the families of the people who have demonstrated HBT bullying behaviour and those of the victim.

Consequences must be consistent, applied quickly and communicated to the victims and their families. If the victim is an adult, they should be informed about the course of action taken.

5.2.2 Supporting

Given the high prevalence of bullying towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ, schools should have systems and processes which address HBT bullying. Schools should ensure its pastoral practices take specific account of this particular need and be vigilant to the signs of poor mental health, any self-harming behaviours or contemplation of suicide by LGB/GQ pupils.

Pupils who are LGB/GQ may not be able to speak to the adults and other young people around them about how they are feeling or what they are experiencing, both internally and externally. Therefore, they may seek information from the internet to understand their feelings and identities. This leaves them more exposed to the risk of relying on strangers to inform them about their sexuality and identity which in turn can leave them more at risk of exploitation and harm. Additionally, it is critical not to 'out' a pupil before they are ready. Therefore, we should aim to:

- Help young people to understand and make sense of their feelings and experiences
- Create safe spaces for pupils who are LGB/GQ to communicate with peers and safe adults
- Be vigilant to the signs of online grooming and inappropriate contact with adults they do not know.

Creating a supportive environment should be central to the prevention part of this guidance, however, proper support should be in place in the event of an HBT incident.

- Support should ideally be underpinned by a trauma informed approach
- Where appropriate, a young person may want to peer to accompany them through the process (however, it is for the school to determine where this would be appropriate and essential that the school is mindful throughout the process of the peer's wellbeing also)
- The victim should be given time and physical space to decompress and process what has happened to them.
- Staff and pastoral specialists should take time to talk to and observe the pupil for signs of mental health needs.



- The pupil should have agency in what has happened to them and what the next steps should be.
- The victim should be 'checked in' on regularly after the incident as it may take time for them to be able to fully process and understand their experience and express their feelings about it.
- Additional support should be signposted to the pupil and their adults at home in an anticipatory manner, should they need it. This may include, where appropriate their church or faith community, or local LGB/GQ support groups and services.

5.2.3 Reporting

It is essential that schools keep an accurate log of the types and frequency of bullying. It is advisable to separate bullying towards those who are (or perceived to be) lesbian, gay and bisexual from bullying of gender questioning children or transgender adults. This enables the school to track any recurring patterns of bullying behaviour, and ensures that their responses can be targeted and fit for purpose.

It is advisable to regularly interrogate the data on bullying to understand the nature and prevalence of bullying and specifically HBT bullying in the school. Schools should then create an action plan to address these challenges and improve the inclusion, belonging, and therefore flourishing, of all.

6. Specific recommendations for Church school phases, Diocesan Boards of Education and the National Society for Education

6.1 Specific guidance for Church of England primary schools and their nurseries (where applicaable)

Bullying can be a significant issue for pupils in primary schools. Research has indicated that there is a decline in the risk of frequent bullying with age, with more children in primary school experiencing bullying than in secondary school.[100] Experiencing bullying at an early age affects a child's long term perception of school leading to higher absence, poor wellbeing and low academic achievement.[101]

How a Church school addresses bullying should sit within the framework of its Christian vision, values and beliefs about how each child reveals the divine nature of God's creation. Church schools need to be safe havens where play, curiosity, exploration and personal development are encouraged. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams argued that modern society has not protected the 'latency

[100] The Children's Society, Good Childhood Report, 2022, [Internet], Available at : GCR-2022-Full-Report.pdf (childrenssociety.org.uk)
[101] Anti Bullying Alliance, Bullying, school experiences and wellbeing: a picture of pupil experience of bullying, 2023, [Internet], Available at : Bullying, school experiences and wellbeing: a picture of pupil experience of bullying 2023

of childhood'.[102] Childhood should be a time where it is accepted that development is still in progress. Williams comments that in our modern world 'children are pressed into adult or pseudo-adult roles as fast as possible'.[103] This need to protect childhood from early sexualisation and consumerism has been taken up by the Mothers' Union in their Bye Buy Childhood campaign.[104] It is also a theme in the Bishop of Gloucester's Liedentity campaign which seeks to protect young people from the damaging influence of social media and promote the message that who you are is more than how you look.[105]

At the same time, the use of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language is still widespread with pupils regularly hearing negative language used about LGB/GQ children and LGBT+ adults . Therefore specific work to counter the use of intentionally derogatory language such as 'you're so gay' or 'your pencil case/trainers are gay' is necessary. This reinforces the importance of using acceptable and kind words at all times and guards against a culture where loose and careless use of language causes harm and distress. This needs to be tackled in a way which is specific to age and the particular needs of each cohort.

It is not appropriate that a primary school's strategy for combatting bullying towards LGB/GQ pupils or LGBT+ adults should focus on any aspect of differing sexual practices (i.e. what people do with their bodies sexually, although human reproduction may be an element of the science curriculum). An exploration of differing sexual activity would go against a primary school's responsibility to safeguard the latency of childhood. This is reflected in the government's draft RSHE statutory guidance. [106]

One of the four strands of the Church of England Vision for Education is Dignity and Respect. This happens best in a culture of love that accepts, forgives and keeps faith with children and young people as they understand more about the world and explore questions of selfhood.

Areas of Focus	Primary School Specific Guidance
Culture, Policy & Training	• An inclusive ethos is central to a primary school's work on combatting HBT bullying. • Policies and procedures should set out how the school will address issues surrounding bullying, including use of language and mocking of different family structures. • Regularly monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the policy and appointing a lead governor for HBT anti-bullying. • Promoting a strong anti-bullying stance should include explaining that HBT remarks and behaviour are unacceptable.

[102] Williams, Rowan, Lost Icons, Page 9, Morehouse, 2002
[103] Williams, Rowan, Lost Icons, Page 11, Morehouse, 2002
[104] Mothers' Union, Bye Buy Childhood | A Mothers' Union campaign on the commercialisation of childhood, [Internet]. Available at : Bye Buy ChildhoodBye Buy Childhood | A Mothers' Union campaign on the commercialisation of childhood (muenterprises.org)
[105] Diocese of Gloucester, Liedentity, [Internet], Available at: http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/parish-resources/communications/liedentity/
[106] Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance, 2024, [Internet] Available at : Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance

	• All stakeholders, including governors, receiving regular training on identifying, understanding, and addressing HBT bullying. They should also have an in-depth understanding of the Equality Act and the PSED and how they apply within an educational context. • Explicitly encouraging inclusion and professional conduct amongst staff, including the requirement to treat one another with dignity and respect. This can be done in the staff handbook and during inductions and should include a mechanism for staff to report peer-to-peer bullying anonymously. • Understanding that parents/ carers are key partners in tackling any harassment towards LGB/GQ pupils or LGBT+ adults such as derogatory comments, taunting or name-calling and behaviours aimed at humiliating others.
Curriculum	• Primary-aged pupils should have the opportunity to learn that families sometimes look different to their own, and that these differences should be respected. This may include families with LGBT+ parents/ carers as well as single parents/ carers, foster parents, grandparents and a range of different family make-ups. This is important for all pupils as they navigate life in modern Britain. • Learning that healthy friendships are ones which are positive and welcoming towards others, and ensure others are not excluded. This should be explored through the PSHE curriculum, and through the books pupils read. • Knowing the importance of respecting others, including those who are very different from them or have different preferences or beliefs[107]. This should be explored through the RE curriculum and through strategies such as the Difference course. • Ensuring the statutory guidance for Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education is implemented. This would usually include 'teaching awareness and respect towards LGBT people.'[108] It should not include an exploration of differing sexual activity (see 6.1) above. • If a school cannot show that they have properly consulted their community about its teaching about LGBT+ people, this will be taken into account by Ofsted inspectors when making the leadership and management judgement.

6.2 Specific guidance for Church of England secondary schools

Adolescence is a transitional stage of life marked by questions of identity and belonging. This developmental phase often involves heightened body consciousness and the effects of puberty hormones, leading to internal conflicts in the search for confidence[109]. Additionally, adolescence is a

[107] Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance, 2024, [Internet] Available at : Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance

[108] Ofsted, Inspecting Teaching of the Protected Characteristics, August 2023 [Internet] Available at Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[109] Johnson, R. Puberty and Its Impact on Adolescent Development, 2019, Academic Press.

stage in which young people navigate social dynamics and peer relationships, which can significantly influence their self-perception and emotional wellbeing[110]. During this period, young people seek to understand who they are and who they will become as adults[111]. An inclusive support system, comprising of but not limited to family, school, and community, plays a crucial role in helping adolescents manage these challenges and develop a healthy sense of self.[112]

Bullying towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ, or towards LGBT+ adults, as well as the inappropriate and derogatory use of the term 'lesbian' or 'gay' remain a significant issue at secondary level. Clear policies, strong messages, anti-bullying work and the consistent challenging of HBT bullying and language are vital tools in ensuring Church of England secondary schools are places of welcome where all can achieve their best in an emotionally safe environment and can grow to have 'life in all its fullness'.[113]

In most secondary schools, some individuals will be questioning their sexuality or gender. It is important that school counsellors, learning mentors and chaplains are appropriately trained to be able to support pupils through this vulnerable time. Furthermore, schools need to pay particular attention to ensure they are not targets of HBT bullying or any other kinds of harm. Some pupils may 'come out' during their time at secondary school and again appropriate care and unequivocal support is needed both for them and their family. When a pupil gains appropriate support through a time of uncertainty and change, their academic achievements are more likely to be safeguarded and their flourishing enabled. For pupils with a strong faith this may be an even greater time of anxiety and confusion as they grapple with the fear that their family or faith community may struggle to accept them. Ensuring that those providing confidential pastoral support have specific training is a priority for secondary schools, otherwise well-meaning staff could inflict greater unintentional damage. Church of England secondary schools with appropriately skilled and trained chaplains or chaplaincy teams are likely to be able to offer highly effective pastoral support in this context.

We live in an age where there is an endemic crisis in young people's wellbeing and a huge rise in reported mental health issues. Bullying or social isolation can significantly impact a young person's mental health and wellbeing. It is important that pupils are educated about the impact of prejudice and the harmful language of labelling and stereotyping that can occur towards LGB/GQ young people and LGBT+ adults.

In alignment with our Vision for Education, pupils and staff in Church of England secondary schools should prioritise practices that foster an inclusive culture, promoting dignity for all and supporting the understanding of diversity and difference. It is vital that all Church of England secondary schools are places of welcome and belonging where every pupil who is (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ can achieve their best in an emotionally safe environment, free from all forms of bullying and fear. This requires a non-negotiable culture of standing up to HBT bullying and deep compassion and proactive consideration of the LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults within each school setting.

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[110] Brown, B. B., & Larson, R. W. The Handbook of Adolescent Psychology, 2018, Wiley.
[111] Smith, A., Identity Formation in Adolescence, 2020, Routledge.
[112] Garcia, M. , Supporting Adolescents Through Their Development, ,2021, HarperCollins.
[113] John 10:10

Areas of Focus:	Secondary School Specific Guidance
Culture, Policy and Training	• The school's senior leadership providing clear messaging about and transparent procedures for identifying, reporting, and addressing HBT bullying (including the use of derogatory language, written or verbalised and negative gestures). This should include incidences within and outside of school and online (cyberbullying). • Developing the school's anti-bullying policy, preventative measures and procedures for dealing with HBT bullying with pupils to ensure their voices inform the school's decision-making in this area. It is critical that the voices of LGB/GQ pupils are centred in this process. • Regularly monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the policy and appointing a lead governor for HBT anti-bullying. • All stakeholders, including governors, receiving regular training on identifying, understanding, and addressing HBT bullying. They should also have an in-depth understanding of the Equality Act and the PSED and how they apply within an educational context. • Explicitly encouraging inclusion and professional conduct amongst staff, including the requirement to treat one another with dignity and respect. This can be done in the staff handbook and during inductions and should include a mechanism for staff to report peer-to-peer bullying anonymously. • Providing clear procedures for whistleblowing and reporting any HBT bullying by senior leaders. This should include the school's governors and may also need the involvement of the diocese and/or multi-academy trust. • Raising awareness about HBT bullying by holding events and initiatives around anti-bullying week, which are referred to throughout the year.
Pastoral Guidance	• As adolescents gain more freedom and access to social media through the use of mobile phones, chat apps, and gaming communication, making sure the school's anti-bullying policy explicitly includes all mechanisms of peer-to-peer communication. This sends a clear message that bullying through conventional and non-conventional mediums of communication will not be tolerated. • Social media can provide avenues for pupils in secondary schools to malign and bully teachers, including those who are LGBT+ . The school's anti-bullying policy should include guidance regarding pupil-to-staff bullying in any form, including but not limited to use of memes and animations, spreading of malicious misinformation or direct discriminatory language. • Ensuring a diverse array of reporting methods, including an anonymous mechanism and a designated person whom pupils can speak to. The pupils we surveyed voiced that having a 'safe' staff member to speak to is essential to tackling bullying. • Utilising technology for reporting incidents of bullying, alongside more traditional anti-bullying suggestion boxes to ensure full accessibility.
Curriculum	• Recognising the contributions of key LGBT+ figures from history and modern culture, and the richness they have brought to our world. This

	may include members of the school's wider community, who are welcomed into school to speak about their life and work. • Learning about legally protected characteristics including sexual orientation and gender reassignment. This teaching and learning is most likely to occur in the PSHE curriculum in line with government guidelines. • Learning about LGBT+ families and relationships through RHSE. 'LGBT-relevant knowledge and examples are included throughout programmes of study (not one-off teaching)'[114] • Learning how to navigate and hold difference well, including different religious and non-religious beliefs relating to human sexuality and gender. These must be carefully planned and would usually be taught through the RE curriculum.

6.3 Guidance for Diocesan Boards of Education

If HBT bullying is going to be eliminated from Church of England schools, then those who have responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of Church schools must take an active role in encouraging their schools to implement measures to tackle it. With the many responsibilities and agendas school leaders have to hold and navigate, tackling HBT bullying is not always prioritised. Diocesan Boards of Education (DBEs) need to take a lead in ensuring their schools have strategies in place to prevent and respond to incidents of HBT bullying. As part of their role, DBEs may 'give advice on matters affecting Church schools in the diocese to: the governing bodies or proprietors of those schools, the trustees of church educational endowments, and such other persons concerned with education in the diocese as the DBE considers appropriate.'[115] That should include advice on implementing the recommendations of this suite of resources. For example, a diocese may require new governors to indicate their commitment to ensuring schools are actively tackling HBT bullying in all its forms.

DBEs should advise schools on appropriate strategies for inclusion and equality and the prevention of bullying, including HBT bullying. They may also provide training for Church schools which pertains to HBT bullying, such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training, guidance on navigating the church-school relationship, or working with faith communities and parents/ carers. They will furthermore need to be assured that their schools have met the expectations of the legal frameworks and inspection criteria under which Church schools operate. Tackling HBT bullying is at the heart of this work.

[114] Gov.uk, Training Module: Teaching About Families, May 2023 [Internet] Available at https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6454dec8c33b46000cf5e723/RSHE_Families.pptx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK RSHE_Families.pptx (live.com)
[115] Legislation.gov.uk, Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 Available at https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/2021/1/enacted



'A flourishing diocese lives out its generous vision for education with dignity, ensuring that every child from every background has access to the highest quality of education, through which their flourishing is released.'[116]

Specific recommendations for Diocesan Boards for Education:

- Ensure their schools are aware of this documentation and know how to implement the recommendations
- Support governing boards to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's policies and procedures to deal with HBT bullying
- Provide or signpost training for schools in areas related to HBT bullying, such as understanding the Equality Act and PSED, working with parish churches and clergy and the expectations of the inspectorate(s)
- Set clear expectations for schools regarding the treatment of LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults generally and HBT bullying specifically

6.4 Commitments from the NSE

The work of the NSE is centred on the flourishing of all pupils and adults in schools, and to that end commits itself to:

1. Stating clearly that HBT bullying is unacceptable and must be taken seriously in schools
2. Modelling respectful and honouring language and behaviour towards LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults , and acting upon feedback when it falls short of this
3. Listening to the voices of children and young people who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ and LGBT+ adults, ensuring their experiences and views shape this work
4. Keeping this suite of documents under review so that it reflects any related decisions by the House of Bishops or General Synod, current government guidance, research and best practice
5. Delivering high-level training and resources, in partnership with dioceses and school trusts, to support schools in implementing the recommendations of this document
6. Providing ongoing anti-bullying guidance around the specific areas of work the NSE is currently engaged in (i.e. racial justice, SEND, faith and belief, VAWG, child poverty)

September 2024

[116] Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing School System, p21 [Internet] 2023 Available at our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf (churchofengland.org)

Appendix 1: Pupil Survey Responses

Quotes from pupils within the document are from a NSE survey of Church secondary school pupils in May 2024.

Additional responses:

Pupils were asked what, if any, bullying they had experienced or witnessed. Here are some example responses as to why they had experienced or witnessed bullying:

'just for being themselves'	'for being Asian; people make fun as a joke but sometimes it is racist and rude'	'fat shaming', 'for their weight'
'for literally anything and everything'	'for not speaking English and for their skin'	'because of their hobbies or what they do outside school'
'for being different'	'for being a lesbian'	'Because the persecutors might have problems at home - this isn't a justifiable reason though.'
'for their appearance', 'for their hair colour', 'for their looks'	'because they are gay'	'People will make fun of things like an ill parent or something along those lines.'
'for their intelligence', 'being smart or a 'nerd"'	'medical conditions'	'judged for looking or acting slightly different to the norm'
'poverty'	'disabilities'	'sometimes for no reason at all'
'for being quiet, for being shy'	'their names, their passions and the things they like'	'yes, for existing'

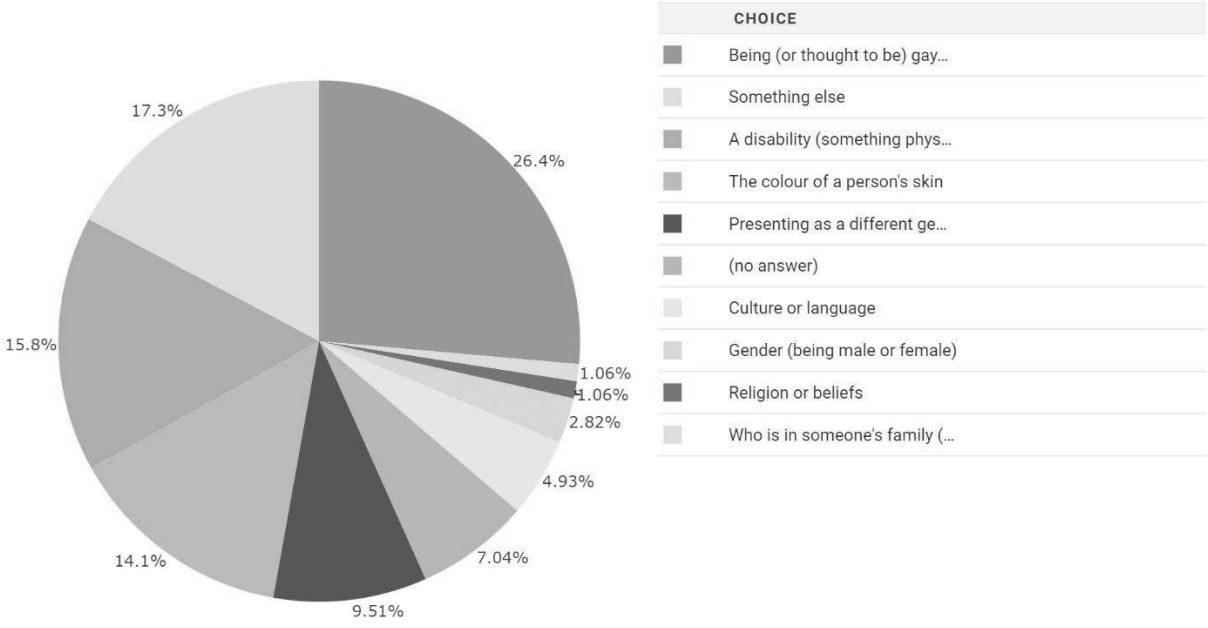
Pupils were asked what their school did well and what more they thought their school could also do to tackle bullying. Some example responses are:

'I personally have been bullied so I know the difference the school can make'.
'Listen to students when we are trying to explain it' and 'make more open space to talk about it freely.'
'Talk to people and not just the outspoken kids.'
'Support groups for people who have experienced bullying.'
'Relatable examples to do with bullying.'
'Regular assemblies – bullying is rare in our school and is deal with effectively when it does happen. Restorative justice meetings between students is an effective strategy.'

‘Teach students how bullying affects the victims’ lives and that people should accept others for who they are.’
‘We have anti-bullying ambassadors’
‘There is a place where you can report bullies while being anonymous’; the ‘bully button’ online.
‘We have rules and a lunchtime club for anyone who needs help.’
‘The pastoral team’
‘Letting the victims know that the bullies have been dealt with; getting the bullies to apologise’
‘They work quickly and hard to prevent bullying; they take the time to assess the situation’
‘We’ve discussed different forms of bullying and how it is not tolerated. It is managed very well to make sure no one gets bullied.’
‘Promote a good environment subconsciously.’
‘Involve parents’
‘I know that tackling bullying is important to my school because of the safe space created by the school.’

Awareness of Bullying

6. Which of these do you think is the most common reason for bullying? (please choose one only)



Appendix 2: Glossary for Part B

In *Flourishing for All*, we speak about 'LGB/GQ pupils' (lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or gender questioning) or 'pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ'. This follows the language used by the Department for Education in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)'. [117] In recognition that gender reassignment remains a protected characteristic in the Equalities Act 2010, we refer to adults in the document as LGBT+ or transgender. This document also acknowledges that some pupils are bullied because they appear to be LGB/GQ, and some adults because they appear to be LGBT+, regardless of whether that is in fact accurate.

Whilst we speak about LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults as specific groups, it is important to recognise that there are a wide variety of terms that people can use to describe their sexual orientation and gender identity, and the terms people use may change over time.

This glossary draws upon the glossary in 'Living in Love and Faith'[118] alongside language from the current draft Department for Education guidance on Gender Questioning Children[119] and the 2024 Cass Review.[120]

Sexuality: A person's emotional, romantic and or sexual attraction to another person.

Terms that some people may use to describe their sexuality:

Lesbian
Refers to a woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards women.

Gay
Refers to a man who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality - some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian.

Bisexual
Refers to a person who has an emotional and/or sexual attraction towards people of more than one gender.

Homosexual
This might be considered a more medical term used to describe someone who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards someone of the same gender. It is not the preferred term amongst gay/lesbian people. The term 'gay' is now more generally used.

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[117] Gov.uk Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2024, [Internet] Available at: Keeping children safe in education 2024 (publishing.service.gov.uk), p55
[118] Church of England *Living in Love and Faith* (2020) Church House Publishing p425-7
[119] Department for Education, Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance, December 2023, [Internet], Available at : https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender-questioning-children-proposed-guidance/supporting_documents/Gender%20Questioning%20Children%20%20nonstatutory%20guidance.pdf
[120] Dr Hillary Cass, Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people: Final report, April 2024 [Internet], Available at : https://cass.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CassReview_Final.pdf

Heterosexual
A term used to describe someone who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards someone of the opposite gender.

Asexual
This refers to individuals who experience little to no sexual attraction to others. Asexuality does not necessarily imply a lack of romantic attraction, and asexual individuals may still form romantic relationships and experience emotional intimacy with others.

Sex and Gender

Terms that may be used with regards to (biological) sex and gender:

Sex
This term is typically used to refer to biological status as male/female but may refer to genetics, anatomy, physiology or legal status.

Gender
The cultural constructions associated with being male/female or other gender categories, as distinguished from biological sex.

Gender questioning
A broad term that might describe children and young people who are asking questions about their biological sex and perceived gender identity. This is the current term used by the UK government.

Gender Identity[121]
This is a sense a person may have of their own gender, whether male, female or another category, such as non-binary.

Cisgender
This is a term introduced to refer to people who identify exclusively with their biological sex.

Non-binary
A gender identity that does not fit into the traditional gender binary of male and female.

Transgender man
An adult man who was biological female at birth but identifies and lives as a man.

Transgender woman
An adult woman who was biological male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman.

[121] Current government guidance states that this is a 'contested belief'. Department for Education, Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance, December 2023, [Internet], Available at : Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance (education.gov.uk)

Transsexual
This term was used in the past but is not commonly used now and is not preferred either in medical circles or amongst trans people. It has been replaced by the preferred term 'transgender' (see above).

Gender incongruence
A medical diagnostic term for a marked and persistent incongruence between an individual's experienced gender identity and their biological sex.

Gender dysphoria
A similar diagnostic term to describe gender incongruence of at least 6 months' duration, which is manifested by a number of criteria. The condition is 8 associated with clinically significant distress or impairment in social or other important areas of functioning.

Gender reassignment
The legal or surgical process of transitioning from one sex or gender to another. This is the term used in the Equality Act, but not the preferred terminology for transgender people.

Gender Recognition Certificate
This enables transgender people to be legally recognised as their self-identified gender and to be issued with a new birth certificate, provided under the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA). Not all transgender people will apply for a GRC and you have to be over 18 to apply. You do not need a GRC to change your gender at work or to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport.

Transition
These are the steps a person may take to live in the gender in which they identify. This may involve different things, such as changing elements of social presentation and role and/or medical intervention for some.

Social transition[122]
A term often used to refer to a process by which people change their name, pronouns, clothing, or use different facilities from those provided for their biological sex.

Watchful waiting[123]
An approach by which a child/young person's gender journey is observed (without intervention) to see how their gender identity and expression naturally evolves.[124]

Pronouns[125]
The words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation – for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their.

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[122] Government guidance on socially transitioning can be found throughout Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance (education.gov.uk)
[123] Government guidance on watchful waiting can be found on page 9 of Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance (education.gov.uk)
[124] CassReview_Final.pdf (independent-review.uk) p246
[125] Government guidance on the use of pronouns for pupils questioning their gender can be found on page 13 of Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance (education.gov.uk)

Intersex
A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Can identify as male, female, or non-binary.

Intersex is a term used to describe individuals who are born with variations in sex characteristics that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. These variations can include differences in chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs, or secondary sexual characteristics. Intersex people may have physical traits that are typically associated with both male and female sexes, or their bodies may not clearly align with typical male or female anatomy.

Other related terms:

Queer
In the past, a derogatory term for LGB/GQ and LGBT+ individuals. The term has been reclaimed by some LGB/GQ and LGBT+ people and is used as an affirming self-descriptive and inclusive term for all LGB/GQ and LGBT+ people. However, the history of the word is violent and traumatic for some, and therefore heterosexual and heteronormative people should avoid using it since it is still viewed to be derogatory by some.

Questioning
An exploratory approach to one's own sexual and gender identity.

Coming out
When a person first tells someone/others about their identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender/ gender-questioning. It is important to remember that 'coming out' is not something that happens once, but can be something a person has to do many times throughout their life.