



Parent Information

Relationships Education

Including and valuing ALL children

What do we teach about LGBT+ relationships?

Introduction

Within the new DfE guidance and legislation for Relationships and Health Education, schools are actively encouraged to be open and honest with parents and carers about their intended Relationships and Health Education curriculum, and the resources they will be using. We will use this text as part of our desire to share curriculum content with parents and carers.

In this leaflet we use the term LGBT+ to mean Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. The + acknowledges sexualities and gender identities other than lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

Children are good at accepting and looking past differences to the person. They are happy to be friends with and work with any peer they like and feel comfortable with, regardless of the differences that might be apparent. Of course, difference is sometimes used as a source of bullying and we work hard to alleviate this.

So, firstly, it is important to state that, through our teaching, we nurture positive and healthy relationships across the school community. We want all children understand what makes a relationship positive and healthy and can recognise and get help if they are experiencing something unhealthy. The starting point is building a positive, respectful relationship with self, engendering a sense of belonging and inclusion.

There is minimal focus on sexual orientation and gender identity in our schemes of learning. We teach enough to enable children to understand the meaning of the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual. At no point in this work is there any mention of sexual activity. It is about people and who they love, are attracted to and may want to marry or spend their lives with.

This work is about alleviating stereotyping, accepting and respecting all people and celebrating differences of all sorts. In this way we aim to value and include all children and all family compositions, not to mention all teachers and members of the school community, thus equipping children for life in the UK today.

We hope this leaflet helps to explain what do we teach about LGBT+ relationships and why.

Ensuring all children feel included

Our schemes of learning are underpinned by the philosophy that we value every child as a unique human being, to enable everyone to feel included and to celebrate difference, thus developing empathy, compassion and respect for self and others.

We believe that school is a place where all children should feel safe and respected. Part of this is helping children to understand there are many differences and similarities between people and that this can be positive rather than a source of negativity, bullying or discrimination.

Through our scheme of learning, we talk about children and people as being of equal value, without labels, and considers the qualities most important in human beings. We unpack stereotypes and influences and help children become mindful, aware of their thoughts and feelings and the impact these may have.

Families

One of the differences children will be familiar with is family composition. There are many family situations; some children will have parents who are separated, some may live with a mum and a dad, some may have stepparents, some may live in extended multi-generational families, and some may be fostered or adopted. Some may have other family arrangements; and some of those in parenting roles will be heterosexual and some will be LGBT+.

Through our scheme of learning, every effort is made to reflect a wide range of families within images so that all children can resonate with their own experience of 'family'. No child should ever be made to feel less accepted, or that their family is any less loving and caring than another. Careful treatment is given to avoid children being at risk of picking up 'hidden messages that may suggest to them their family is 'not as good as' or 'not right'. Children who feel unaccepted or isolated are more vulnerable, possibly feel less secure, and potentially less able to apply themselves to learning.

Examples of teaching materials

Our teaching materials sometimes use images of people and sometimes distance the learning by using, for example, cartoon characters.

Ages 7-8 Celebrating Difference

This lesson offers many images and asks children, 'Which pictures show a family?' thus opening a discussion on what makes a family and concluding that what is important is that we are loved and cared for, whatever our family composition.



Ages 5-6 Relationships

This lesson uses cartoon characters from Planet Zarg to suggest there are many different sorts of families.



Children as individuals

Some children at Pinner Park may feel they are different in some way. This difference may be about their developing sexuality or gender identity, but equally, it may be about appearance, body-image, achievements, language, accent or any number of perceived differences.

The second unit in our scheme of learning for all year groups, called 'Celebrating Difference', is all about similarity and difference; the underpinning aim being to help children love and accept themselves for who they are and build a positive relationship with self and with others.

There is no direct teaching about children themselves being heterosexual or LGBT+, rather each child is treated as a valued individual.

It is important that children understand that individuality is positive and not a source of negativity, thereby leading to acceptance and respect for self and others. As they explore who they are, we hope that any perceived differences will then be received in a positive way, without fear.

We do not explicitly teach about heterosexual or LGBT+ relationships in adulthood either, other than to explain that any two adults can love each other and be attracted to each other. We promote and nurture respect and acceptance for all, focussing on the characteristics of positive, healthy relationships children themselves will be experiencing e.g. family and friends.

Eliminating bullying and giving an age-appropriate understanding

Bullying is often focused on some aspect of difference, hence the Celebrating Difference work which includes anti-bullying work. When discussing any differences between people, we teach children to form opinions about others based on whether they are kind, law-abiding, respectful, trustworthy, and responsible people, rather than judging them on appearance or any other aspect of difference or on first impressions or unsubstantiated judgements.

Children will have heard, or will come to hear, words such as 'gay', 'lesbian' or 'transgender'. Sometimes these words can be used as insults or derogatory terms. In this context, We explain the meanings of these words age-appropriately and teaches that these are not to be used in derogatory ways as this could cause hurt or harm and are disrespectful. No words are ever to be used to cause hurt or harm.

Our duty to uphold the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The PSED or the Equality Act, as it is more commonly known, requires schools to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relationships. By doing so, the Equality Act encourages schools to meet the diverse needs of children and to improve outcomes for all pupils regardless of background. Part of the Equality 'duty' is to teach children about rights and responsibilities, acceptance, empathy and understanding of others. Our schemes of learning align to this throughout.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and British values.

The requirement to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is set out in the Education Act (2002).

In 2014, additional guidance was published for schools with regards to teaching British values. Guidance states that schools should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance, and makes it clear that children should learn about discrimination and how to combat it. As previously discussed, Jigsaw lessons, particularly in the Celebrating Difference units of work, include teaching children about acceptance, empathy, prejudice and discrimination, and the rights and responsibilities they have as UK and global citizens. A school's SMSC education is an important part of the Ofsted inspection framework.

Our legal obligation to safeguard our pupils

Safeguarding guidance establishes that schools must protect all children from physical and emotional abuse including bullying (on and offline) and abuse that could happen from an adult or from other children.

Teaching children to accept there are a whole range of differences in people, helps combat stigma, discrimination and bullying. Children also need to be taught how to access help if they are involved in a bullying, or abusive situation. Our lessons, particularly in the Celebrating Difference and Relationships units of work, teach children why bullying can happen and why it is unfair, how to recognise a bullying situation and how to get help. Within this work children discuss a wide range of reasons why some people are bullied, or become bullies, and this includes some discussion around name-calling which includes the inappropriate use of words such as 'gay' and 'lesbian' as an insult towards another person.

Statutory Relationships and Health Education in England

Relationships Education and Health Education became statutory for all primary schools in England from September 2020; schools being required to follow the published guidance.

Primary children learn that not all families are the same and to respect these differences. They also learn about bullying and how to treat others with respect, whether this is within their immediate relationships, or in the wider community.

The guidance also states that when learning about different families, care should be taken to avoid stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances. It also reaffirms the duty for schools to comply with the Equality Act, where sexual orientation and gender reassignment are two of the nine protected characteristics.

The Relationships and Health Education guidance does not suggest a specific age when LGBT+ relationships should be brought into the curriculum, but there is an expectation for this to be included in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner, and in an inclusive way throughout, not simply as a one-off lesson or topic.

Gender Identity

In one lesson for Year 6, children are introduced to the word 'transgender' so they understand what it means. This lesson has a focus on prejudice and discrimination where a transgender example is used. The Equality Act is also explained in an age-appropriate way.

This lesson does not promote transgenderism. It simply explains what being transgender is, and how some people who are trans face unfair prejudice and discrimination, in the same way that other people do through, for example, racism, ageism, sexism and prejudice against people who are disabled.

Parental right to withdraw

Since September 2020, parents may only request to withdraw their children from non-statutory Sex Education in PSHE.

Relationships Education and Health Education are statutory; this includes lessons on puberty, prejudice and discrimination, bullying, difference and diversity, and different families, including the content discussed in this leaflet.

This information is based on a leaflet, produced by Jigsaw, which has been written to provide parents and carers with information about the LGBTQ+ content of the Jigsaw materials, and how they support the school to meet its statutory obligations.