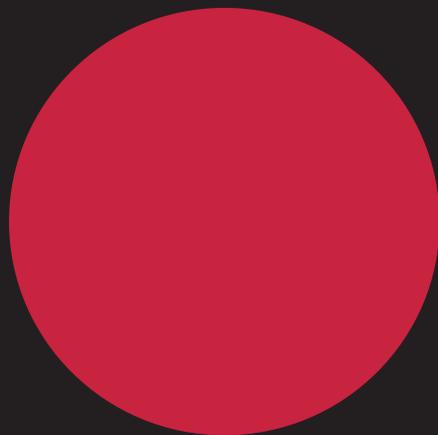
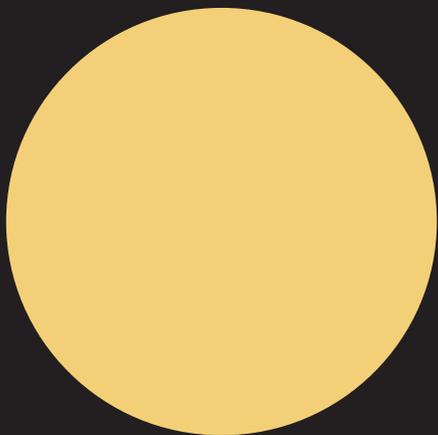
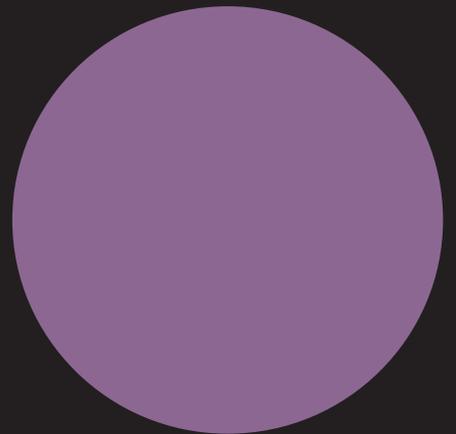
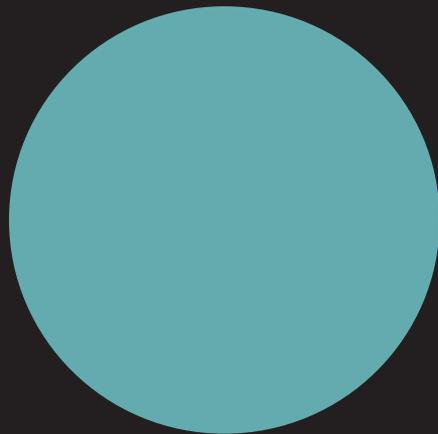
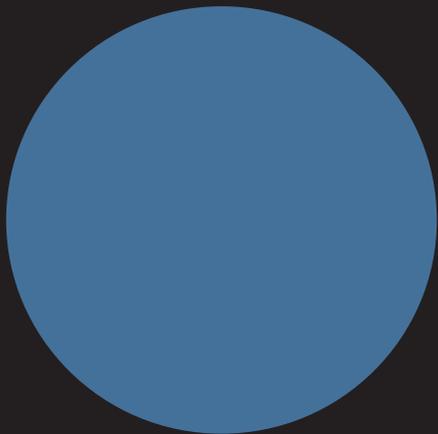


# THE SCHOOL REPORT

The experiences of gay young people in Britain's schools in 2012





THE **SCHOOL REPORT**

# The experiences of gay young people in Britain's schools in 2012

**BY APRIL GUASP**

Survey and analysis by **Helen Statham**  
with Vasanti Jadva & Irene Daly  
Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge



# Introduction

Although the last version of this study was conducted four years after the repeal of Section 28, its shadow continued to loom large. Consequently, many teachers not only lacked the confidence and skills to tackle homophobic bullying, but weren't even sure that they were allowed to do so. Stonewall's groundbreaking 2007 study revealed the full extent of the damage caused; two thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people reported experiencing homophobic bullying at school and only a quarter of schools were saying that such bullying was wrong.

In response, and with the vital support of the Monument Trust and Paul Hamlyn Foundation among others, Stonewall produced a range of pioneering, high quality and age-appropriate resources to help local authorities, schools and teachers to tackle homophobic bullying. We've also worked with key education agencies and directly with schools and colleges around Britain to ensure, that for the first time, teachers have the support they need to combat homophobic bullying in the classroom.

The School Report 2012, a survey of more than 1,600 gay young people, demonstrates the encouraging results of this work. Levels of homophobic bullying have fallen by 10 per cent since 2007 and the number of schools saying that homophobic bullying is wrong has more than doubled, to 50 per cent. This research also provides clear evidence that in those schools that are taking simple steps to tackle homophobia, pupils are both much less likely to have been

bullied and much more likely to feel happy and welcome in their schools.

But the study leaves little room for complacency. More than half of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people still report experiencing homophobic bullying and its damaging impact is just as pronounced. Over two in five gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying attempt or think about taking their own life as a direct consequence. Three in five young people say that bullying has a direct impact on their school work and straight-A students have told us it makes them want to leave education entirely. As policymakers look for ways to boost attainment and raise aspiration it's clear that tackling homophobic bullying should be close to the top of their agenda.

As the education landscape evolves it's critical that all the key players – from the Department for Education, to academy chains, to individual schools – don't lose sight of their own role in tackling homophobic bullying. Building on the good work already being done, learning from the best and pushing others to improve, we can continue the progress of the last five years in creating learning environments across Britain



where all young people are able to achieve their full potential. This was our vision when Stonewall was created in response to Section 28. It remains our top priority today.

**Ben Summerskill** Chief Executive

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**More than half** (55 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people experience homophobic bullying in Britain's schools.



I've had a death threat sent to me saying how someone wanted to *'...shove a knife up my arse and in my throat...'* because I'm gay.

**Ninety six per cent** of gay pupils hear homophobic remarks such as 'poof' or 'lezza' used in school. **Almost all** (99 per cent) hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school.



It's incredibly widespread – 90 per cent or more of students refer to anything broken, defective or unwanted as 'gay'. The most common insult is to call someone else 'queer', 'gay' or a 'faggot'.

**Only half** of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils report that their schools say homophobic bullying is wrong, even fewer in faith schools at **37 per cent**.



I was knocked unconscious with a thrown calculator in maths class once. The teacher did nothing.

**Three in five** gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that teachers who witness the bullying never intervene.

Only **ten per cent** of gay pupils report that teachers challenge homophobic language every time they hear it.



I was a straight A\* student. I got 100 per cent in my science exams, I'm really proud of that. But because of bullying my classwork and coursework has suffered, leaving me with a lower grade, about a C/B.

**More than half** (53 per cent) of gay young people are never taught anything about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues at school.



I'm not going to university anymore because I'm too worried it'll just be the same.

**One in three** (32 per cent) gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying change their plans for future education because of it.

# 1 Key Findings

## BULLYING

- **More than half** (55 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people experience homophobic bullying in Britain's schools
- **Ninety six per cent** of gay pupils hear homophobic remarks such as 'poof' or 'lezza' used in school
- **Almost all** (99 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school
- **More than half** (53 per cent) of gay pupils experience verbal homophobic bullying, **almost a quarter** (23 per cent) experience cyberbullying and **one in six** (16 per cent) gay pupils experience physical abuse
- **Six per cent** of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are subjected to death threats
- **One in three** (32 per cent) gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying change their plans for future education because of it
- **More than half** (53 per cent) of gay young people are never taught anything about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues at school
- **More than four in five** (85 per cent) gay young people are never taught in school about biological or physical aspects of same-sex relationships
- **More than half** (54 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people don't feel there is an adult at school who they can talk to about being gay. **One in four** (25 per cent) don't have an adult to talk to at school, home or elsewhere
- **Nearly one in four** (23 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people have tried to take their own life at some point. In comparison, Samaritans says seven per cent of all young people in general ever attempt to take their own life
- **More than half** (56 per cent) of gay young people deliberately harm themselves, which can include cutting or burning themselves. NSPCC estimates that between 1 in 15 and 1 in 10 young people in general deliberately harm themselves

## HOW SCHOOLS RESPOND

- **Three in five** lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that teachers who witness the bullying never intervene
- Only **ten per cent** of gay pupils report that teachers challenge homophobic language every time they hear it
- Only **half** of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils report that their schools say homophobic bullying is wrong, even fewer in faith schools at **37 per cent**
- **One in four** (26 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils – and **more than one in three** gay pupils in faith schools (36 per cent) – report that teachers who hear homophobic language never challenge it
- **Almost two in five** (37 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people who are bullied never tell anyone they are experiencing homophobic bullying
- When young people tell someone about the bullying, in most cases (almost two thirds, 64 per cent) telling someone does nothing to stop the bullying

## CONSEQUENCES FOR GAY PUPILS

- **More than two in five** (44 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying skip school because of it, **one in seven** (13 per cent) skip school more than six times

## WHAT WORKS WELL

- Homophobic bullying of gay pupils is lower in schools that explicitly state that homophobic bullying is wrong
- Gay pupils are also much less likely to be bullied in schools that respond quickly to homophobic bullying than in schools that don't respond to incidents. Gay pupils in these schools are **three times** more likely to feel their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome'
- In schools that have sought to eliminate homophobic remarks and where such language is rarely or never heard, the incidence of homophobic bullying is just **37 per cent** compared with **68 per cent** in schools where homophobic language is heard more frequently
- Only **one in three** (34 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who are taught about or discuss gay issues in school say this is done in a way they find is positive overall. Gay young people are much less likely to be bullied in schools that teach and address gay issues positively compared with schools that do so negatively

# 2 Prevalence of homophobic bullying

Homophobic bullying is commonplace in Britain's secondary schools and colleges. More than half (55 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people experience homophobic bullying at school.

**I've been bullied since I was in Year 6. I've been called numerous names in the corridor, I've been hit. A lot of people have argued with me about how being gay is wrong. I've had a death threat sent to me saying how someone wanted to '...shove a knife up my arse and in my throat...' because I'm gay.**

David, 17, secondary school (East of England)

Even if not bullied themselves, almost all (99 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school, with nine in ten (89 per cent) hearing such comments often or frequently.

**You wouldn't go around calling someone 'black'. 'Oh you're so black.' It's the same thing as saying 'oh you're so gay'.** Andy, 14, secondary academy (South East)

**I hear a lot of 'that's so gay' and it really upsets me. I'm one of the only people that actually challenges it, and when I do I'm met with a response of 'oh, gay doesn't mean the same thing anymore, it just means bad'.** Becky, 15, secondary school (South East)

Ninety six per cent of gay pupils hear other insulting homophobic remarks, such as 'poof' or 'lezza', with more than two thirds (68 per cent) hearing such comments often or frequently.

**I hear 'dyke' and 'homo' nearly every lesson.**

Em, 16, secondary school (Greater London)

**I hate it when students use homophobic words like 'gay' or 'faggot', it's horrible. I always tell them it's wrong but only a few of the teachers ever say anything.**

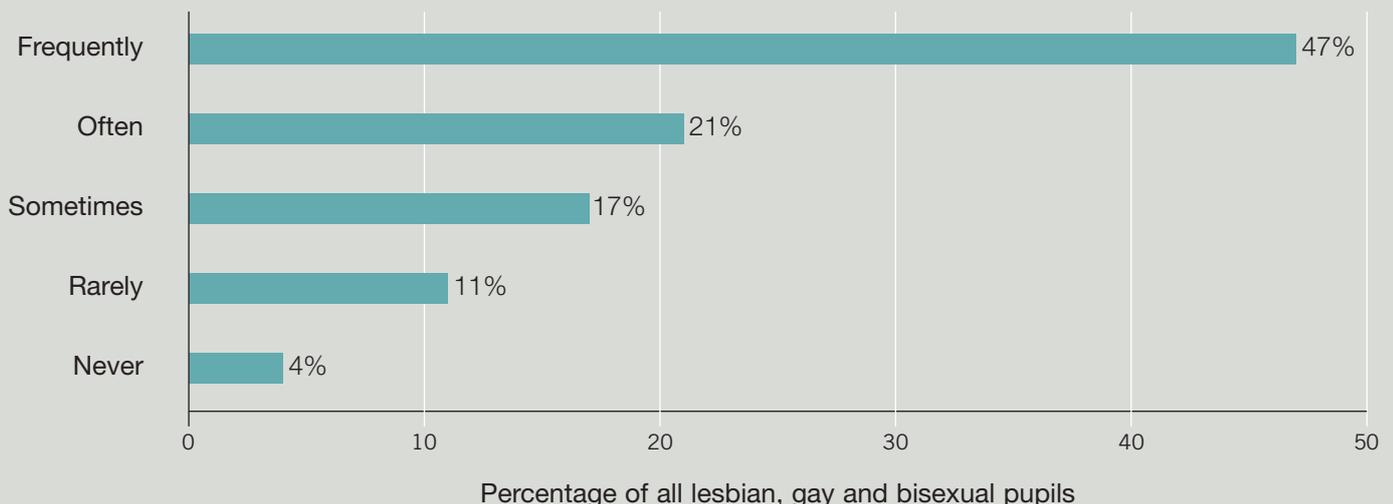
Chloe, 13, secondary school (South East)

**It's not what they say to me individually that gets at me, it's the constant stream of anti-gay remarks that people don't even know they make. I feel awful all the time. It eats away inside you and sometimes knowing what they'd do to me if they knew makes me lose the ability to breathe.**

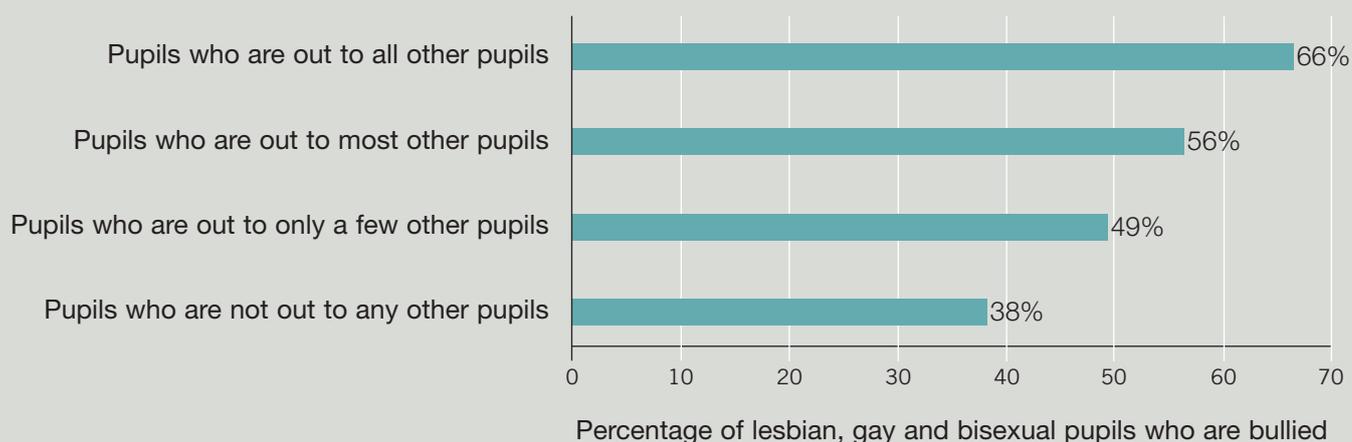
Sophie, 15, private secondary school (South East)

The presence of homophobic language is strongly linked to bullying. In schools where pupils frequently hear homophobic language, such as 'gay' being used negatively or insults such as 'poof' or 'dyke', the rate of homophobic bullying is nearly double compared to schools that have sought to eliminate homophobic language; 68 per cent of gay pupils are bullied in these schools compared to 37 per

## HOW OFTEN DO YOU HEAR HOMOPHOBIC REMARKS SUCH AS 'POOF' OR 'LEZZA' MADE IN SCHOOL?



## WHO EXPERIENCES HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING



cent in schools where homophobic language is heard rarely or never.

### WHO IS BULLIED?

Boys are more likely than girls to experience homophobic bullying (66 per cent compared to 46 per cent) and gay and lesbian pupils are more likely to be bullied than their bisexual counterparts.

#### Pupils who experience homophobic bullying



Gay pupils who have a disability or long-term physical or mental health issue are at greater risk of experiencing homophobic bullying; **66 per cent** are bullied.

While there are no significant differences in rates of bullying due to ethnicity among gay and bisexual boys, homophobic bullying of black and minority ethnic lesbians and bisexual girls is lower, but still experienced by a **third** at **33 per cent**.

The more open or 'out' about their sexual orientation a pupil is to his or her peers, the greater the likelihood of being bullied.

**I was bullied from Year 8 onwards, which was when I came out. It has died down a bit but never stops.**

Lewis, 15, secondary academy (Greater London)

In line with differences in rates of bullying according to gender, homophobic bullying is reported by **66 per cent** of gay pupils in all-boys schools and, while still a significant problem, is lower in all-girls schools at **45 per cent**.

**It went on for most of my secondary school which was an all-girls grammar school. I even got surrounded and threatened by about 30 girls on the bench once in the school playground and the teachers didn't do anything about it.** Grace, 17, sixth form college (South East)

Rates of homophobic bullying do not vary between pupils in state or private education, or for pupils in academies or boarding schools. Pupils in faith schools are now no more likely to report bullying than those in non-faith schools, even though faith schools are still less likely than schools in general to take steps to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying.

When looking at incidences of homophobic bullying in the current school year alone, bullying of gay pupils is more frequent in secondary schools than in sixth form and further education (FE) colleges. In this school year, **more than a third** (35 per cent) of gay pupils in secondary schools have been bullied compared to **one in five** (20 per cent) in FE colleges and **one in six** (15 per cent) in sixth form colleges.

There were no material differences in rates of homophobic bullying in different regions of the country, nor with the urban or rural location of schools.

# 3

## What does homophobic bullying look like?

Homophobic bullying of gay pupils – being bullied because you are (or people think you are) lesbian, gay or bisexual – ranges from verbal abuse to death threats and takes place in and around school, including while pupils are in lessons.

Almost two thirds (64 per cent) of gay and bisexual boys and more than two in five (44 per cent) lesbians and bisexual girls face verbal abuse.

**Two people tripped me during softball and screamed “QUEER!” at me.**

Tyler, 16, single-sex private school (Greater London)

**People were calling me names and laughing at how short my hair is and gossiping to the friend next to them about me.**

Caitlin, 11, single-sex secondary school (Greater London)

**I tried coming out as bisexual at 16 to everyone, but all throughout class I got chants of ‘bi-bi’ being thrown at me, thinking they were funny. The teacher was right there and never said a word.**

Olivia, 18, secondary academy (North West)

**I was taunted and ridiculed for most of the year.**

Malik, 16, FE college (East Midlands)

More than half (52 per cent) of gay and bisexual boys and

two in five (40 per cent) lesbians and bisexual girls are gossiped about. One in three lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are subjected to some form of intimidation.

**People in the year above give me strange looks and whisper about me. I know it’s because of the way I dress. It hurts knowing that these people walk past me every day and can’t see me for anything but a lesbian.** Amy, 17, secondary school (East Midlands)

**My former best friends started talking about me in classes behind my back. I found out when a group of girls called me over and said ‘so-and-so has been saying that you are a lesbo’. I strongly denied it, but that night I cried myself to sleep. I was scared to go to school the next day.**

Ellie, 14, secondary school (Scotland)

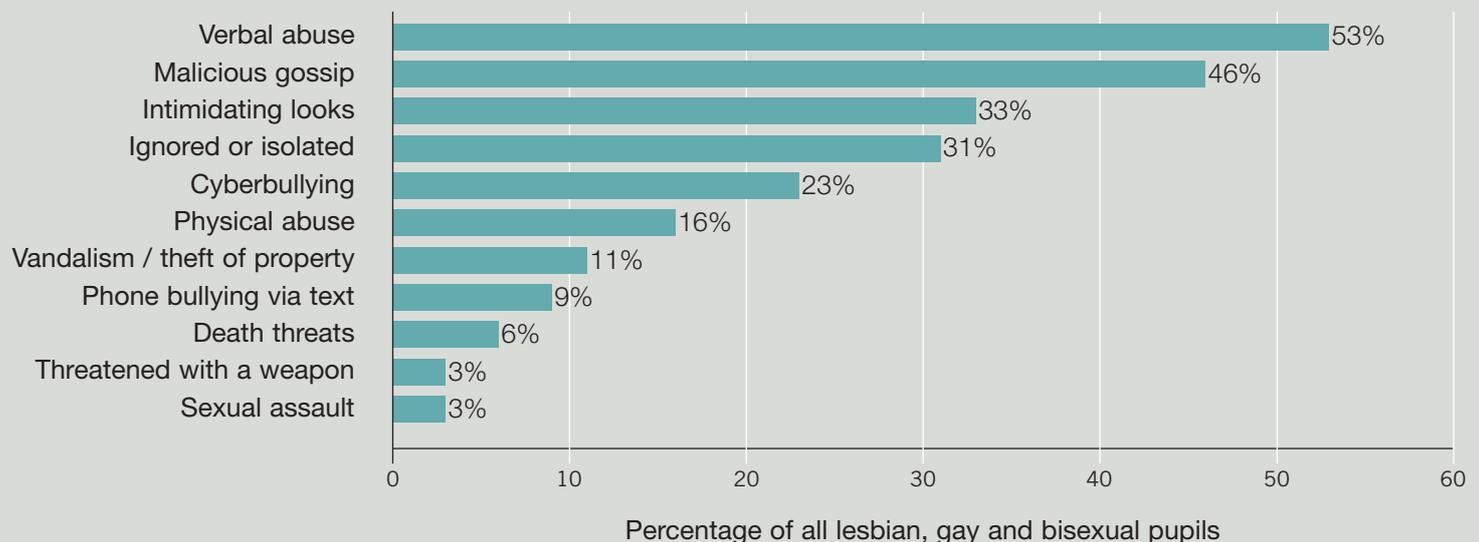
Almost a third of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are ignored and isolated by other people.

**I was alone for quite a long time, in lessons as well as during breaks. Other people only talked to me to tease me.**

Megan, 16, faith secondary school (Yorkshire and the Humber)

**I would often be isolated from certain friends who couldn’t accept me for who I am. They often then**

### TYPE OF BULLYING FACED BY ALL LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PUPILS



**took things from me as a 'game' and threw them around.** Molly, 16, FE college (South West)

Almost one in four lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils experience cyberbullying and almost one in ten are bullied by text message. Cyberbullying takes place online and through social media. Bullying can occur on message boards, blogs and sites like Facebook, through posting abusive messages publicly or direct messaging between young people. LittleGossip is a web forum where pupils can leave comments anonymously about their named peers, which are often homophobic. For example, in named schools, pupils are called 'gay' 'lezza' 'fag' and 'nasty lesbian'.

**Last summer, I was attacked on Facebook through a series of comments and wall posts calling me a 'fag'.**

Harry, 16, single-sex private school (North West)

**Sometimes I'd get messages on Facebook from people I didn't know threatening me and telling me not to come back into school.**

Will, 16, secondary school (Greater London)

Boys are more likely than girls to be bullied with physical abuse (21 per cent compared to 11 per cent), which includes being hit, punched and kicked or having objects thrown at them.

**Garbage, rock fragments and debris have been hurled at me on my way home from school.**

Jack, 17, secondary school (East of England)

**I've been spat at, had objects, water and mud thrown and kicked at me. Snowballs filled with stones have been thrown, and for an extended period I was**

**threatened with lighters and the taunts of burning me. I would also be sprayed with deodorant and hairspray.** Max, 15, secondary academy (Yorkshire and the Humber)

**I had my hair pulled by one individual. I was thrown down some stairs by another.**

Jade, 15, secondary school (West Midlands)

More than one in ten lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils have their property vandalised or stolen.

**My locker was broken into and my property vandalised with anti-gay words.**

Thomas, now 19, single-sex faith academy (North West)

Six per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils face death threats and three per cent are threatened with a weapon.

**I was walking along the street one day with my friend. A boy came at me shouting abuse. He pulled out a knife and was getting everyone to encourage him to hurt me. Luckily I had a friend with me and she pushed him away and we both got away physically safe, but mentally very scarred. Following that, the boys on the way to and from school threw things at me, threatened me, and tried to set fire to the school bus seat I was sitting on. It's still going on.**

Leah, 16, secondary school (Scotland)

**I was nearly stabbed with a knife by three lads in a food design lesson. I was getting abuse and bullied everywhere I went in the school.**

Oliver, 17, secondary academy (North West)

**A boy threatened to kill me once, I was so scared.**

... they threw things at me,  
held me back using my bag –  
which burnt my arms –  
chased, spat at, hit, kicked  
and stole from me. COREY, 16

**A teacher found out and talked to him but he wasn't punished and it wasn't spoken of again.**

Jay, 17, sixth form college (West Midlands)

Three per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils experience sexual assault.

**During a holiday with the school, an older boy decided after someone else said I was gay to pretend to have sex with me. People who I thought were my friends found this funny which I found betraying and devastating.** Adam, 16, secondary academy (West Midlands)

**I've been threatened to be raped by two boys when my friends and I were walking home. They were both sentenced in court and ordered to pay my friends and me compensation.** Lily, now 19, FE college (South East)

## WHERE DOES HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING TAKE PLACE?

More than one in three lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils experience homophobic bullying during lessons.

**I had books being thrown at me in lessons at one point, straight to my head, though the teacher ignored it.** Jo, 17, secondary school (South East)

**Throughout school there have been comments and jokes from other students in lessons, even now.**

Jacob, 16, secondary academy (South East)

Four in ten lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are bullied in corridors and four in ten are bullied on the school grounds.

Three in ten lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are bullied in changing rooms.

**They wouldn't let me in the girls' changing rooms for a year or two so I changed for PE in the loos.**

Gillian, 18, single-sex secondary academy (South West)

Boys are more than twice as likely as girls to be bullied during sport. Thirty two per cent of gay and bisexual boys and 14 per cent of lesbians and bisexual girls experience homophobic bullying during sport.

**It happens anywhere, but particularly in sports lessons. I have to change in a separate changing room now because of the abuse.** Alex, 15, secondary academy (South West)

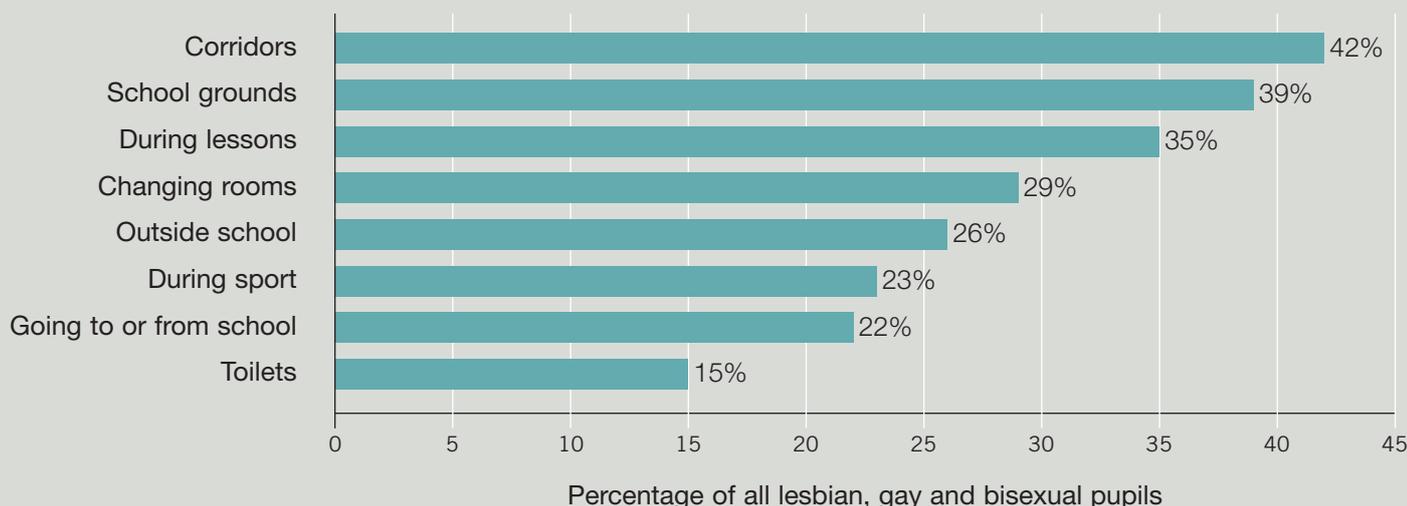
Gay and bisexual boys are also more likely than lesbians and bisexual girls to be bullied on the way to and from school. Twenty nine per cent of boys and 16 per cent of girls are bullied on the way to or from school.

**Every day I face some sort of homophobic abuse. And, honestly it's been so hard! Recently I was chased home by two boys in their car who thought it would be fun to nearly run me off the road and then make homophobic hand gestures while driving past.**

Raj, 16, secondary school (South West)

**At school, it was mostly bad looks and name-calling, but outside of it was another matter. I bumped in to a girl who used to go to my school and some of her friends who were in the year below me. They threw things at me, held me back using my bag – which burnt my arms – chased, spat at, hit, kicked and stole from me.** Corey, 16, secondary school (Yorkshire and the Humber)

## WHERE ARE YOU BULLIED?



# 4 Who's doing the bullying?

Lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are bullied by individuals from across their school community, including from older and younger pupils, boys and girls, and adults at school.

**I have been bullied for the last six years off and on by a variety of people.** Nate, 17, secondary academy (South East)

More than four in ten gay pupils are bullied by boys in their year and three in ten by girls in their year.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils experience homophobic bullying from both older and younger pupils in their school. More than two in ten experience homophobic bullying from older boys and two in ten experience bullying from younger boys in their school. One in six gay pupils experience homophobic bullying from older girls and one in six experience bullying by younger girls in their school. One in six are bullied by pupils who attend other schools.

**Some girls in my year started a petition to force me to use the boys' changing rooms and toilets in the school. It was signed by about 10-15 other girls from my year group.** Francesca, 18, secondary school (North West)

**It's never the same people. It's always a variety of younger boys – boys it seems, never girls. Girls do not seem to confront me with what they think, they tend to just gossip about me behind closed doors.**

Anna, 17, secondary academy (North West)

Two per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are bullied by non-teaching school staff. While no gay young people said they experience 'bullying' by teachers, 17 per cent say that teachers and other school staff, however, make homophobic comments. This increases to 22 per cent for pupils in faith schools.

**I once heard a teacher who I thought was nice say to another kid that he was acting like 'a fag' because he was crying.** Will, 16, secondary school (Greater London)

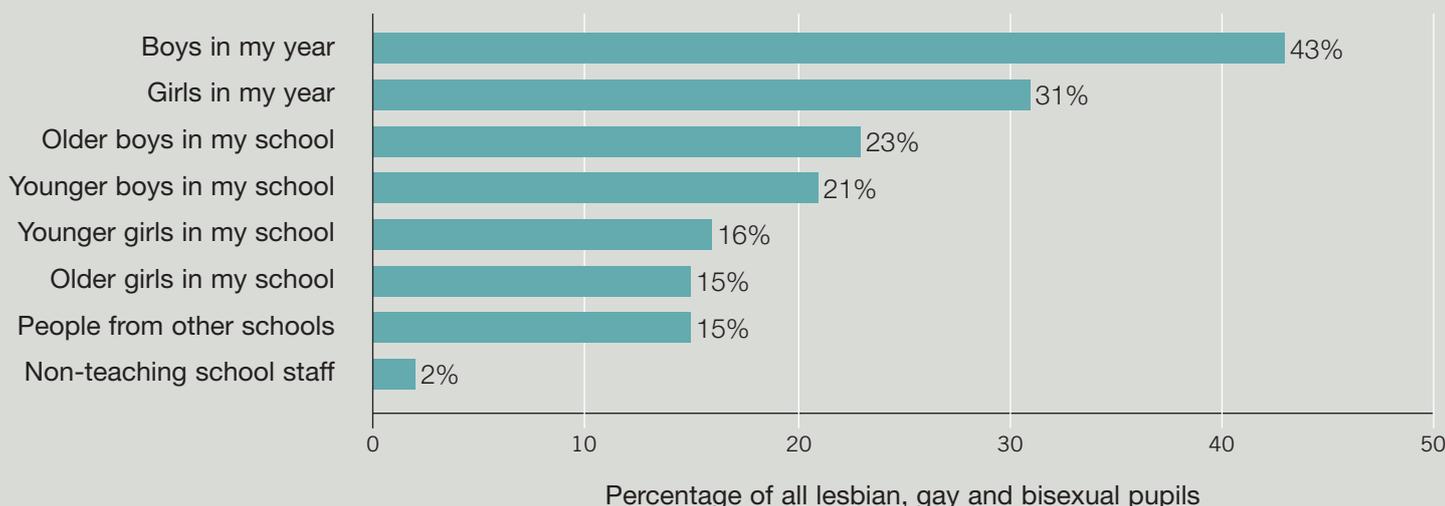
**I hear teachers using the word 'gay' in a negative way just as much as I hear the word being used by students. I don't think in a way directed towards people, just in the slang term that it's become. It still isn't great.** Zoe, 14, boarding school (North East)

**It's definitely a day-to-day basis at my school. It was only the other day that my teacher told a boy to stop wearing purple socks because he 'looks a bit gay'.**

Laura, 15, faith secondary school (South East)

Three in ten (31 per cent) pupils who hear other students make homophobic remarks say these come from 'most students'. More than two in five (45 per cent) hear them from 'some students' and 24 per cent hear them from just 'a few students'. In schools where homophobic comments are widespread with remarks coming from most students, homophobic bullying rates are also very high at 70 per cent.

## WHO BULLIES YOU?



It's incredibly widespread – 90 per cent or more of students refer to anything broken, defective or unwanted as 'gay'. The most common insult is to call someone else 'queer', 'gay' or a 'faggot'. I was called those names and more for several years without any students or staff stepping in to stop it.

CONNOR, 17, single-sex secondary school (South East)

# 5 Responses to homophobic bullying

Many lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils report that their schools often fail to intervene when homophobic bullying and language occurs.

Fewer than a third (31 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people say their school responds quickly to homophobic bullying when it occurs. This proportion is even lower in faith schools at 24 per cent. In comparison, nearly three times as many pupils report their schools respond quickly to racist bullying (90 per cent) or bullying someone because of a disability (85 per cent).

**The amount of times I reported anti-gay bullying is innumerable, yet it was never tackled. The closest it came was a group of boys being told to 'apologise' – this was after several months of taunting and one occasion of actually managing to set me on fire. 'Burn the dyke' was a chant that followed me. I would like school to respond in the same way they do to racism or disability discrimination: rapidly and harshly.**

Max, 15, secondary academy (Yorkshire and the Humber)

**Teachers are not trained properly on dealing with bullying of those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual.**

Beya, 16, secondary school (South East)

In schools that don't respond to homophobic bullying when it occurs, gay pupils are much more likely to experience bullying. More than three quarters (77 per cent) of gay pupils are bullied in those schools compared to 49 per cent in schools that do respond quickly to incidents.

Almost two in five (37 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people who are bullied never tell anyone they are experiencing homophobic bullying.

**My school was an all-girls Christian school so, if anything, I would have gotten into trouble for being bisexual.**

Aisha, 16, sixth form college (East of England)

Feelings of shame about the bullying and their own sexual orientation prevent many bullied gay pupils from seeking help. Three in five bullied gay pupils who never tell anyone, don't tell because they are too embarrassed. Almost three in five don't tell because they fear it will out them as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Almost three in five don't tell anyone because they don't have anyone they feel they can discuss it with.

**They knew I couldn't tell teachers because they convinced me my sexuality would get back to my parents.**

Gabby, 16, single-sex secondary academy (South West)

**They got in trouble for normal bullying and not anti-gay bullying. It would have been better if there was someone I could have told safely that it was about my sexuality but there wasn't so that part wasn't looked at.**

Holly, 17, secondary school (North East)

**I was always too uncomfortable with my own sexuality to report any bullying.**

Owen, 17, secondary school (Wales)

Many gay pupils aren't confident they can turn to adults for help in tackling bullying. Two in five bullied gay pupils who don't tell anyone about bullying, don't speak out because they believe nothing would happen to the person bullying them. A third think teachers would do nothing about it. One in six think no-one would believe them.

**The first year it happened the teachers didn't do anything to stop it. When my mum came in about it they still didn't do anything, so I didn't bother them anymore.**

Daisy, 16, secondary academy (South East)

Witnesses to homophobic bullying rarely intervene. Three in five lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that teachers who witness the bullying never intervene. More than eight in ten say headteachers or other staff, such as lunchtime supervisors, never intervene when they witness homophobic bullying.

**Teachers who had witnessed the bullying did nothing so I thought I deserved to be bullied.**

Nate, 17, secondary academy (South East)

**I was knocked unconscious with a thrown calculator in maths class once. The teacher did nothing.**

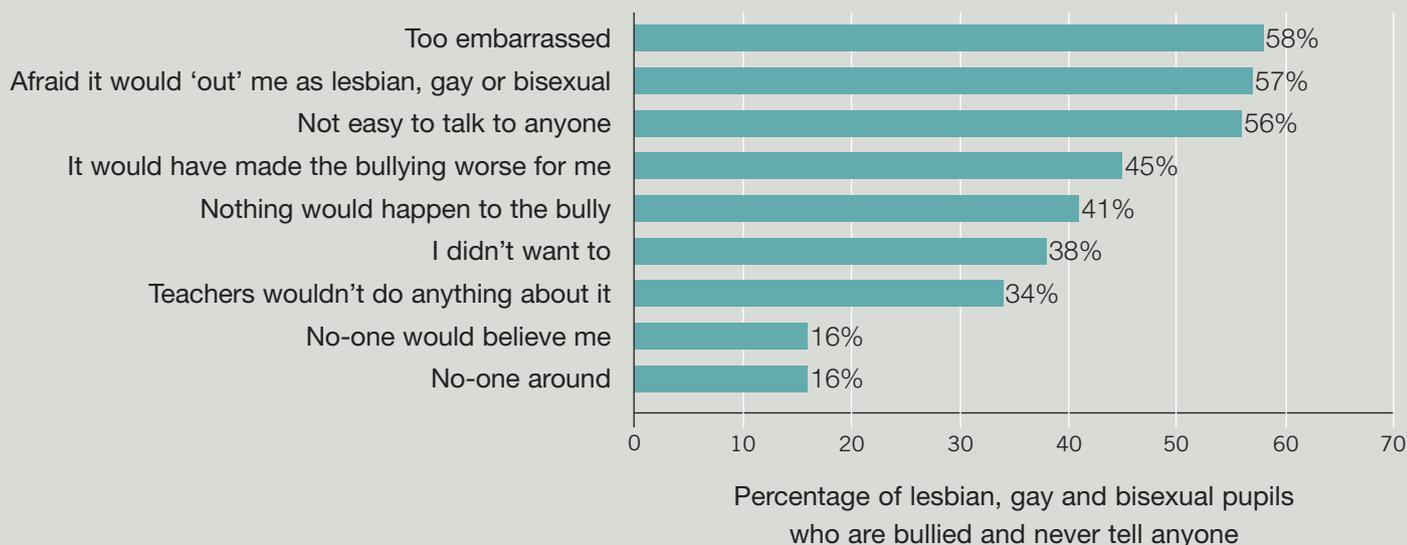
Jody, 16, secondary school (East Midlands)

**I was bullied for a year by a boy in my class. The teachers never told him off for touching me and calling me rude names until I pointed it out three times to my head of year.**

Brisen, 16, secondary school (Wales)

**I've heard a teacher tell another openly gay student to 'act less gay and stop poncing around and flaunting**

## WHY DON'T YOU TELL ANYONE YOU ARE BEING BULLIED?



**it' while he was complaining to her that he was getting bullied.** Alfie, 13, secondary academy (South East)

Almost three in five gay pupils who are bullied say other students who witness homophobic bullying never intervene.

**Not many students stand up for anyone lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, they usually just ignore it or join in.**

Ruby, 15, secondary academy (South West)

Homophobic language often goes unchallenged by teachers and pupils who hear it.

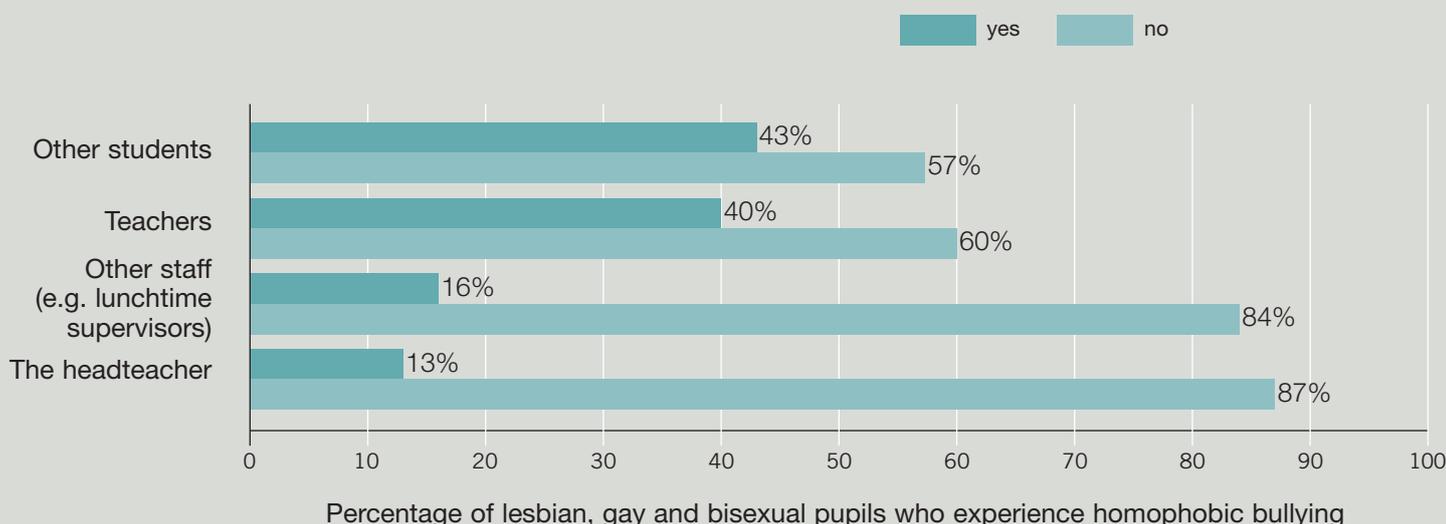
One in four (26 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils – and more than one in three gay pupils in faith schools (36 per cent) – report that teachers who hear homophobic language never challenge it. Only ten per cent of gay pupils

report that teachers challenge homophobic language every time they hear it. **More than half** of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils say other pupils never challenge homophobic language when they hear it.

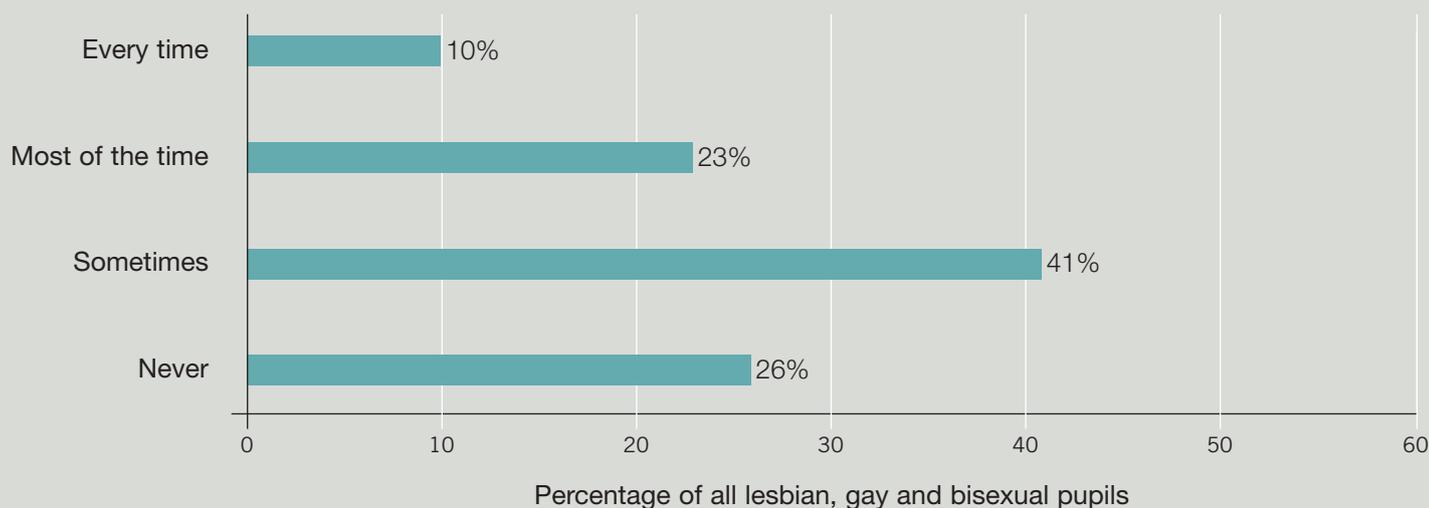
In schools where teachers never challenge homophobic remarks, the rate of homophobic bullying is far higher than in schools where teachers always challenge homophobic remarks when they hear them (71 per cent compared to 43 per cent).

**If someone makes a racist or sexist remark then staff and some students are quick to punish the student who made the remark. But if someone makes a homophobic remark then no one says anything and people just brush it off as if it's alright to say these things.** Liam, 16, pupil referral unit (Greater London)

## DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING EVER INTERVENE WHEN THEY WITNESS THE BULLYING?



## HOW OFTEN DO TEACHERS AND OTHER SCHOOL STAFF INTERVENE WHEN THEY HEAR HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE?



**I brought up the fact that when people use anti-gay remarks nothing is done about it, but they ignored me.**

Maya, 16, single-sex faith school (Greater London)

**Usually anti-gay words and remarks happen every single lesson and 99.9 per cent of the time nothing at all gets done about it.**

Leo, 16, private secondary school (South East)

Some teachers and pupils don't challenge such language because they suggest 'the word "gay" is now used so commonly as an insult it shouldn't be taken as anything personal', that it's 'not meant to be offensive to gay people'. Yet, these comments undermine gay pupils' self-esteem, with more than **four in five** (84 per cent) saying they are distressed to hear the word 'gay' used in this way. **Almost half** (45 per cent) say it distresses them 'extremely' or 'a lot'.

**One teacher tells people off for saying 'that's so gay' but none of the other teachers do – they even suggest it's just a normal piece of language and is acceptable.**

Gabby, 16, single-sex secondary academy (South West)

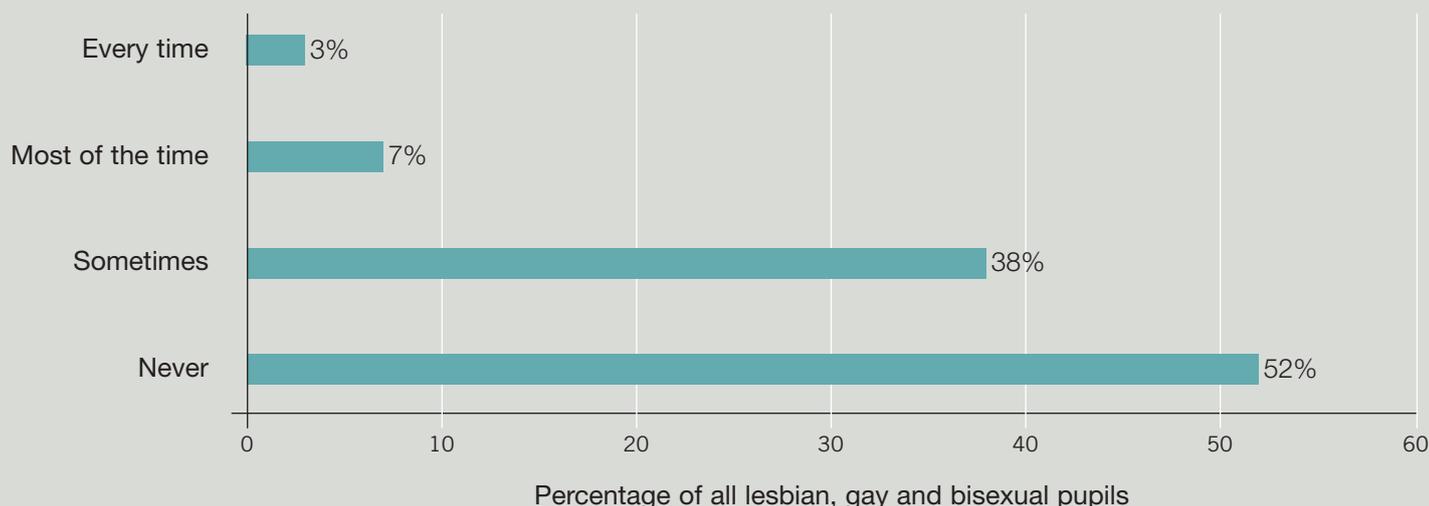
**Teachers don't do anything about it; even teachers have said things are 'gay'.**

Summer, 13, private secondary school (East Midlands)

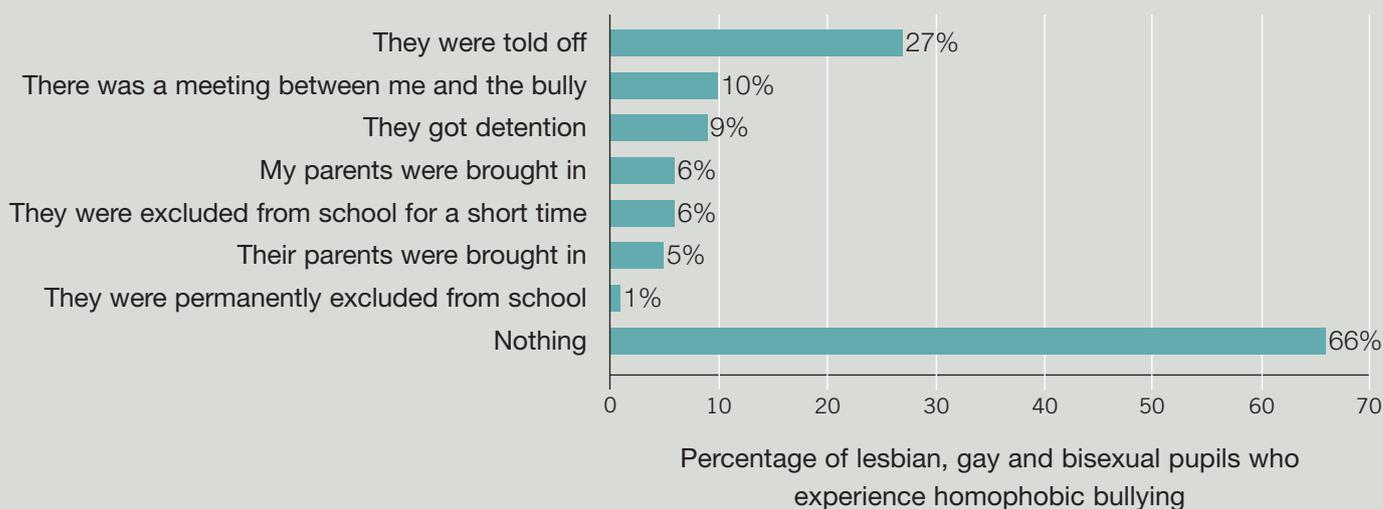
When gay young people experience homophobic bullying and tell someone about it, **most** (90 per cent) tell a friend at school. **Two thirds** (66 per cent) tell a teacher and **one in four** (25 per cent) tell another adult at school such as a classroom assistant. Just **one in five** (21 per cent) gay pupils tell their headteacher.

**More than half** (56 per cent) of gay young people who tell

## HOW OFTEN DO OTHER PUPILS INTERVENE WHEN THEY HEAR HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE?



## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PERSON BULLYING YOU?



someone, tell a parent or carer and 35 per cent tell other relatives. Almost a third (31 per cent) tell another adult outside school including youth workers and family friends. Only **four per cent** of young people who tell someone about being bullied tell a religious leader.

When young people tell someone about the bullying, in most cases (almost two thirds, 64 per cent) telling someone does not stop the bullying. Only **one in eight** (12 per cent) say it stops the bullying immediately with **one in four** (24 per cent) saying it stops the bullying eventually.

Two thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people who are bullied say nothing happens to the bully. Only one in four cases result in the bully being told off and **less than one in ten** are given detention. Few are excluded and rarely are parents involved.

**They just got told 'don't do it again' then went on their way and within a week it was just as bad as it had been beforehand.**

Charlotte, 16, secondary school (North West)

**Nothing happens to bullies at my school. They have a policy that doesn't work. I'd like them to get punished.**

Lola, 13, secondary academy (North East)

**I was bullied in the same way as someone might be bullied for their race, e.g. derogatory name-calling because of my sexuality. If the names had been of a racist nature, the bullies would've been put in isolation or excluded for a short time. I feel that because it was about sexuality, the school felt it was a much more minor problem and did almost nothing.**

Phoebe, 17, faith sixth form college (Yorkshire and the Humber)

... if the names had been of a racist nature, the bullies would've been put in isolation or excluded for a short time. PHOEBE, 17

# 6 Policies, teaching and support

Many lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils report that their schools lack the policies and resources to tackle homophobic bullying and to support gay pupils.

## POLICIES

Only half of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils report that their schools say homophobic bullying is wrong. Even fewer pupils in faith schools at 37 per cent say their schools say homophobic bullying is wrong. In comparison, 95 per cent of schools say bullying because of ethnicity is wrong and 90 per cent say bullying because of disability is wrong.

**The school seems eager to eliminate racism, but says nothing on gay bullying.**

Will, 16, secondary school (Greater London)

**Homophobia isn't really discussed. We touch upon it in Humanities, but it's never been stated as wrong. Teachers do not give sanctions for it, or for anti-gay bullying, and generally the victim is just told not to worry. No actions are taken.**

Max, 15, secondary academy (Yorkshire and the Humber)

Gay pupils are much more likely to be bullied in schools that don't say homophobic bullying is wrong than in schools that do (67 per cent compared to 48 per cent).

**We've had assemblies on the wrongness of bullying which included all examples of when it is wrong, but never has homophobic bullying been mentioned.**

Logan, 18, secondary academy (South East)

Just a third (33 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people say their school says that using 'gay' in a negative way, such as 'you're so gay' or 'that's gay', is wrong. A similar number (35 per cent) say the same regarding use of other homophobic language like 'poof' or 'lezza'.

In schools that don't say homophobic language is wrong, gay pupils are significantly more likely to be bullied than in schools that do (62 per cent compared to 50 per cent).

**I want the school to treat these people the same way they treat people who use racial slurs such as 'paki' or 'nigga'.** Charlotte, 16, secondary school (North West)

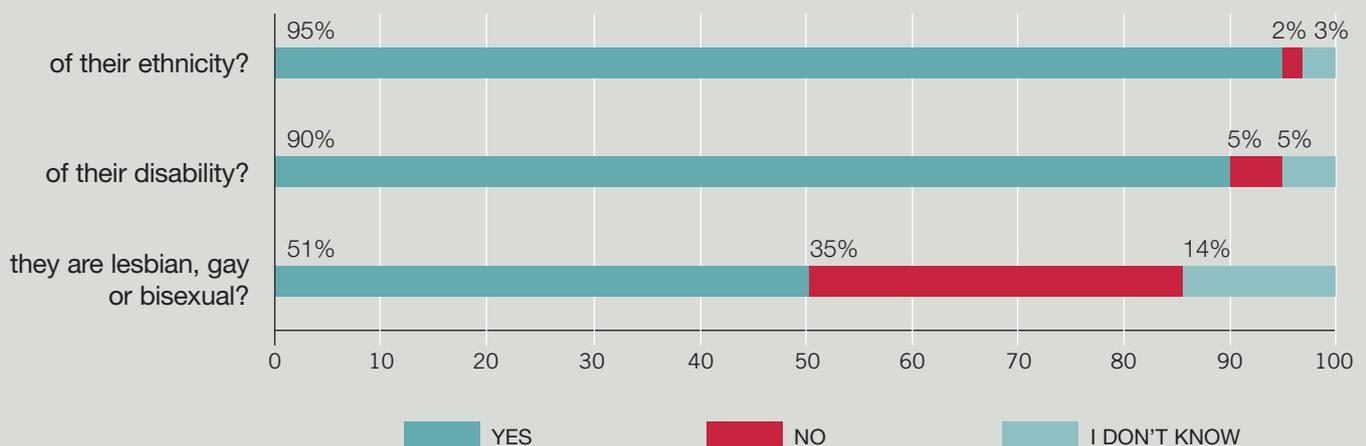
**I think there should be a punishment for anti-gay slurs. However, because I go to a Catholic school, they would do nothing.**

Isabella, 15, faith secondary school (West Midlands)

## CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

More than half (53 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are never taught anything about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in their lessons.

### DOES YOUR SCHOOL SAY THAT IT'S WRONG TO BULLY SOMEONE BECAUSE...



### Being gay is never discussed at school.

Katie, 14, secondary academy (East Midlands)

**My headmistress said she wouldn't want to send her daughter to a school that talked about gay pride in an assembly.** Poppy, 16, single-sex private school (Greater London)

**There's not enough discussion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans issues in Social Education classes or anywhere. I feel there is a distinct lack of awareness regarding these issues.**

Tristan, 17, secondary school (Scotland)

**Our school has given no information to us directly about lesbian, gay and bisexual people at all. I would like this to change.** Lucas, 14, secondary school (South East)

More than four in five (85 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are never taught in school about biological or physical aspects of same-sex relationships. Four in five (81 per cent) are never taught about where to go for help and advice about same-sex relationships.

Stonewall's research into the health needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people found that one in four gay and bisexual men have never been tested for any sexually transmitted infection. Three in ten gay and bisexual men have never had an HIV test. Less than half of lesbians and bisexual women have ever been tested for sexually transmitted infections.

**While we did get taught about sex education, not any of it was sex education for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Because I was not out at the time, I couldn't ask.** Noah, 16, secondary school (South East)

**It all seems very hush-hush and no-one really gives people like me any real information about the physical and biological aspects of same-sex relationships.**

Imogen, 15, secondary school (Yorkshire and the Humber)

**We didn't even get taught that same-sex female couples could spread sexually transmitted infections or get told about any protection for same-sex couples.**

Lauren, 17, secondary school (Scotland)

Three in four (74 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are not taught about or discuss in school that gay people can adopt or have their own children and more than two in three (68 per cent) are not taught that same-sex couples can have civil partnerships.

**I don't know anything about my rights as a gay person, what the law says, or anything about safe sex. We discussed the controversy over gay marriage once.**

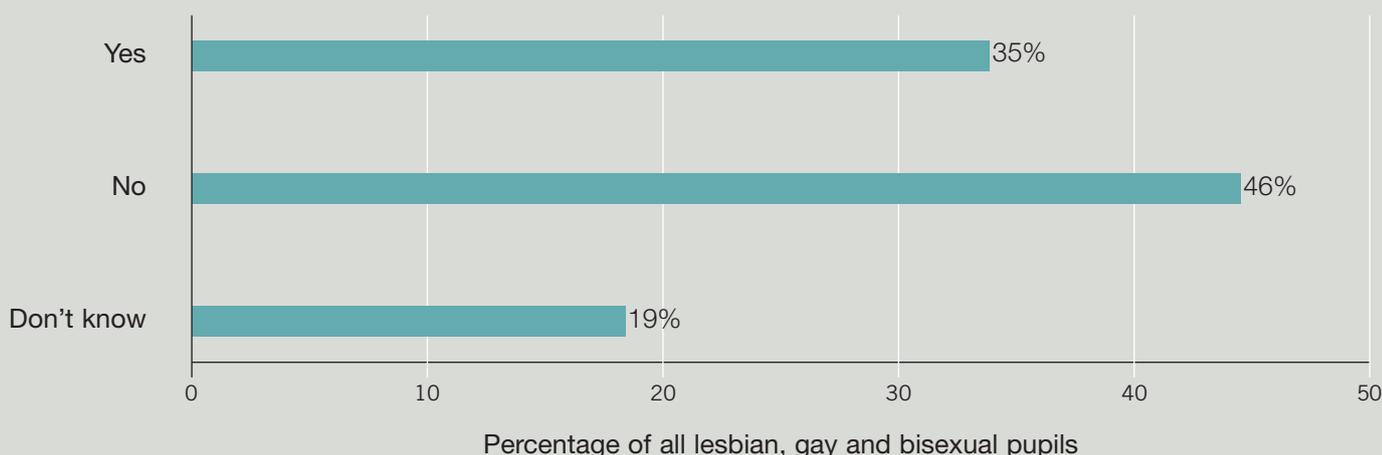
Natalie, 17, secondary school (South West)

One in six (17 per cent) gay pupils who are taught about gay issues say this is addressed in a way that they feel is negative overall. Gay young people are much more likely to be bullied in schools that address gay issues negatively compared with schools that address gay issues positively (76 per cent compared to 46 per cent).

**The class was poorly handled, teacher disinterested in the topic and after a couple of half-hearted attempts to prevent homophobic language he pretended it wasn't going on.** Jess, 16, secondary school (Scotland)

One in eight (12 per cent) gay pupils who say lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are addressed in their lessons say the information they are given is inaccurate or misleading.

## DOES YOUR SCHOOL SAY THAT USING HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE LIKE 'POOF', 'FAGGOT' OR 'LEZZA' IS WRONG?



We have never discussed any marriage, adoption or advice issues concerning lesbian, gay and bisexual people. I've wanted to talk about it, but I don't want to risk drawing attention to myself. It's quite upsetting knowing it's not in the curriculum.

AARON, 15, secondary school (North West)

**My teacher said that he thought George Michael had HIV because ‘he was gay’ [George Michael has never said he has HIV]. Another girl and I challenged him explaining that anyone can get HIV. The sad thing was he is a biology teacher so he should know how people get HIV.** Carys, 16, secondary school (Wales)

**When we did discuss gay issues the teachers were very against it and were saying that all gay people had problems, which made me feel very uncomfortable.**

Dee, 17, private faith school (Yorkshire and the Humber)

**We were told that homosexuality was a sin, disgusting and unnatural in our Religious Education classes.**

Sadie, now 19, faith secondary school (East of England)

## SUPPORT

More than a third (35 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils say their school library doesn't contain books or information about gay people or issues and a further 50 per cent don't know whether their local library does. One in three (34 per cent) gay pupils say they can't use school computers to access resources or information online about gay issues and a further 36 per cent don't know if they can.

**In English we only talked about gay issues in relation to Oscar Wilde. Our school's internet service provider actively blocks most pages about Oscar Wilde and in particular his Wikipedia page, which has details of his sexuality. That seems to be the only reason that his pages are blocked.** Rachel, 17, secondary school (Scotland)

More than seven in ten (72 per cent) gay pupils say their school doesn't have a club specifically for gay pupils and their friends.

**We have tried to set up a group at school for gay people and their friends, but have not been allowed because of the school's faith. This prevents lesbian, gay and bisexual teens helping each other, which is very frustrating.** Amanda, 16, faith secondary school (South East)

More than half (54 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people don't feel there is an adult at school who they can talk to about being gay. One in four (25 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people don't have an adult at school, home or elsewhere they can talk to about being gay.

**It's hard to find an adult you can trust with the truth and how you really feel. I wish there was someone I could talk to, especially a teacher.** Judy, 14, secondary school (Wales)  
Reena, 18, sixth form college (South East)

Just ten per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people go to a youth group specifically for gay young people and their friends. Almost three in four (72 per cent) gay young people either don't have, or don't know if they have, such a group in their area, but half (50 per cent) would like to go to one. Almost all (94 per cent) gay young people who attend these groups feel that they have an adult they can talk to.

Three in five (61 per cent) gay young people know of a general youth group in their area (not just for gay young people), but four in five (79 per cent) don't go. Half (51 per cent) who do attend the general youth group don't feel able to be open about their sexual orientation there.

**I wish there was a youth group as I would really like to meet other teens like me.**

Sally, 15, secondary school (South East)

**Youth workers do the job that teachers miss out on, they solved all my problems and I wouldn't be here today without mine.** Archie, 18, faith secondary academy (North West)

Lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are more likely to go to a gay pub or club than attend a gay youth group. Thirteen per cent of gay pupils aged under 18 and 62 per cent of 18 and 19 year-olds have been to a gay pub or club.

Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of gay young people use the internet to meet other lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Two in five (39 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people use social media, like Facebook, and more than one in three (35 per cent) use websites for young people, such as dedicated online youth forums.

Despite posing significant risks for young people, one in ten (ten per cent) gay young people aged under 18 and one in three (33 per cent) 18 and 19-year-olds use dating websites for gay adults to meet other gay people and learn about gay life.

**Meeting strangers from the internet is extremely appealing as it doesn't share any of the threats that talking to people in your social circle has.**

Kevin, 17, secondary academy (South West)

# 7

## Consequences for gay pupils

Homophobic bullying has wide-reaching negative consequences for lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils on the quality of their learning and engagement at school as well as on their mental well-being.

### A PART OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

More than half (54 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils feel they 'don't belong' at their school. Pupils who experience homophobic bullying are much more likely than those who aren't bullied to feel this way. Almost half (46 per cent) of gay pupils feel unable to be themselves at school.

Almost half (45 per cent) of gay pupils say they feel it's 'hard for people like me to be accepted' at their school. Two thirds (68 per cent) of gay pupils say they don't like team sports.

Two in five (41 per cent) gay pupils don't feel 'part of their school community'. Pupils who are bullied are much more likely than those who aren't bullied to feel this way.

A third (33 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils disagree that their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome'. Pupils who experience homophobic bullying are twice as likely as those who aren't bullied to disagree with this.

One in five (21 per cent) gay pupils don't feel safe at school. Pupils who experience homophobic bullying are three times

more likely than those who aren't bullied to say they don't feel safe at school.

Almost a third (31 per cent) of gay pupils say they 'don't enjoy' going to school and three in ten (29 per cent) gay pupils say they are 'unhappy' at school. Pupils who are bullied are twice as likely as those who aren't bullied to be unhappy at school.

### ATTAINMENT AND ASPIRATION

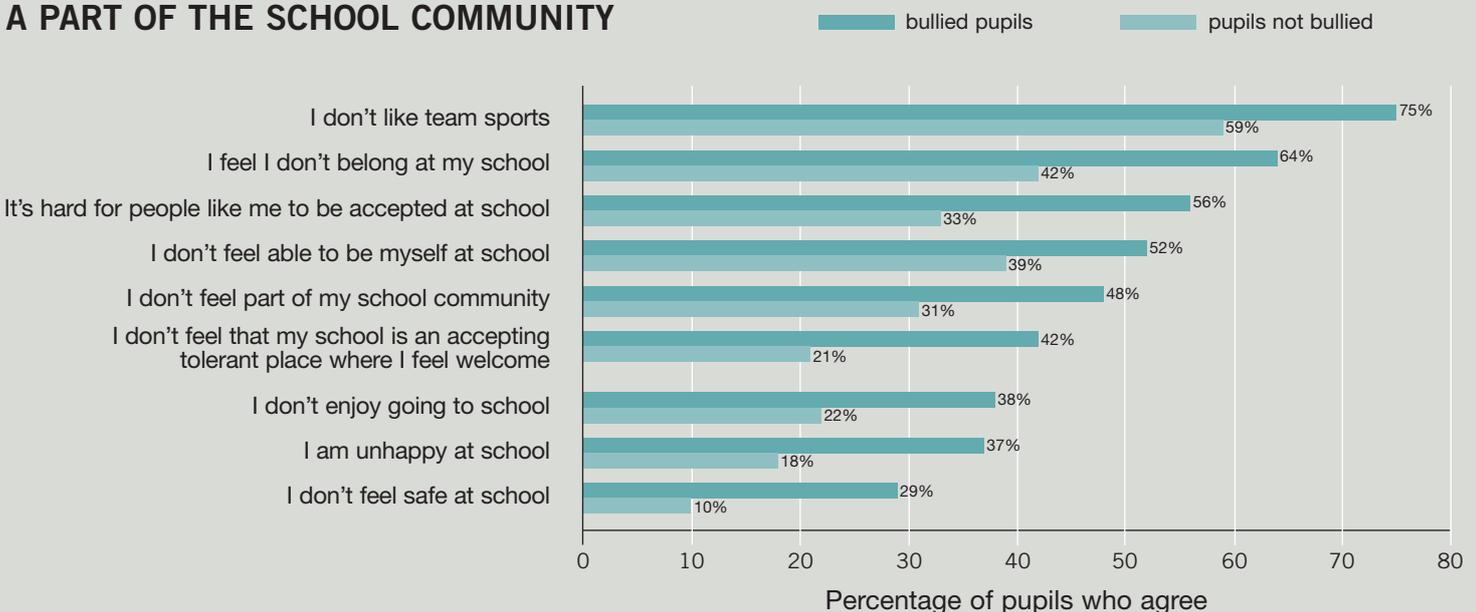
More than two in five (43 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying and even one in three (35 per cent) gay pupils who haven't been bullied don't feel that they are achieving their best at school.

Three in five gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that this impacts on their school work. One in six (16 per cent) say it's had a big effect on their school work.

**I feel that I don't want to carry on in school if this is what I have to put up with and hide what I feel all the time.** Simon, 14, secondary school (South West)

**I was a straight A\* student. I got 100 per cent in my science exams, I'm really proud of that. But because of bullying my classwork and coursework has suffered, leaving me with a lower grade, about a C/B.** Ian, 16, secondary school (South East)

### A PART OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY



**I sat through an English class last year when the rest of the class were constantly making homophobic remarks, and the teacher never commented unless it was disrupting the classwork. I didn't feel confident enough to challenge them, and it got to the point where I dreaded going to the class and achieved lower grades than I was capable of – apparently the teacher and I had different opinions on what disrupted classwork.** Vanessa, 17, secondary academy (West Midlands)

Almost one in ten (nine per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people who experience bullying have had to change schools because of it, and a further 41 per cent have considered it. One in three (32 per cent) gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying change their plans for future education because of it.

**I got bullied because a girl outed me on her bus telling everyone that I'm a lesbian. After that I got bullied for a year and a bit, then I left.**

Briony, 13, now home schooled (South West)

**In classes the bullying was so severe my notes were often ruined. It was impossible to concentrate on the lesson as I was being physically attacked. I was just too scared to attend lessons. My work suffered. The bullying meant I had to change schools in the middle of my GCSEs. My grades fell. I wanted to be a marine biologist, but my science grades were no longer high enough.** Jody, 16, secondary school (East Midlands)

**The bullying made me change my whole career choice as before I wanted to be a politician but now I want to be a musician.** Antoine, 15, secondary school (Greater London)

**I'm not going to university anymore because I'm too worried it'll just be the same.**

Grace, 17, sixth form college (South East)

## SKIPPING SCHOOL

Seven in ten (70 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils skip school at some point. More than two in five (44 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying skip school because of it. One in seven (13 per cent) bullied pupils skip school more than six times. Almost a third (29 per cent) of gay pupils who are bullied say they're likely to miss school in the future.

**My attendance is now 67 per cent as often I am too afraid to attend college.** Amina, 16, FE college (South East)

**It makes me not want to be in my lessons.**

Cat, 14, faith secondary school (West Midlands)

**I missed a lot of school due to bullying. I was out of school for most of Year 11.**

Campbell, 17, secondary school (Wales)

## MENTAL HEALTH

One in four (26 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people who are bullied say they feel guilty about it. Three in five (61 per cent) feel embarrassed and more than two in five (42 per cent) say they feel ashamed.

**It was upsetting for me, but I just thought it was something I had to go through. I didn't think to tell anyone because I didn't think they'd take it seriously enough. I guess I felt embarrassed like it was my fault for being gay and not theirs.**

Hayley, 15, secondary school (West Midlands)

Gay pupils who are bullied are at higher risk of suicide, self-harm and depression. Lesbian and bisexual girls are also at greater risk than gay and bisexual boys, which is true of girls in the wider population in general.

## Suicide

Nearly one in four (23 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people have tried to take their own life at some point. Girls are more likely to attempt this than boys (29 per cent compared to 16 per cent). Seven in ten (71 per cent) lesbian and bisexual girls and almost six in ten (57 per cent) gay and bisexual boys have thought about taking their own life, with boys who are black or minority ethnic at particular risk of suicidal thoughts at 76 per cent.

Gay young people who experience homophobic bullying are much more likely to attempt to take their own life than gay young people who aren't bullied; 28 per cent have attempted to take their own life compared to 17 per cent. They are also more likely to think about it (72 per cent compared to 56 per cent). In comparison, Samaritans says seven per cent of all young people in general have ever attempted to take their own life and 20 to 45 per cent have thought about it.

Two in five (41 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying attempt or think about taking their own life directly because of the bullying.

**The bullying went on for the whole five years of secondary school. From when I started to when I finished. I tried to fight back. I was depressed, I cut, and I was on the verge of suicide. For one year, I came home everyday crying into my mum's arms, saying I wanted to leave the school.**

Rabi, 15, sixth form college (Greater London)

# I once carved the words 'dirty lesbian' into my thigh because people kept calling me that. I hated myself.

CLAUDIA, 17, single-sex secondary academy (South East)

**I experienced a lot of bullying at school. I contemplated suicide and attempted it enough to get me referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.** Drew, 17, sixth form college (West Midlands)

**Because of the bullying I received in school, I was diagnosed with depression, self-harmed and had suicidal thoughts.** Gemma, 16, FE college (South East)

## Self-harm

More than half (56 per cent) of gay young people deliberately harm themselves, which can include cutting or burning themselves. However lesbians and bisexual girls are twice as likely as gay and bisexual boys to self-harm (72 per cent compared to 36 per cent), with girls who are black or minority ethnic at greatest risk at **83 per cent**. Gay young people who experience homophobic bullying are also significantly more likely to harm themselves than those who aren't bullied (61 per cent compared to 50 per cent). In comparison, NSPCC estimates that between 1 in 15 and 1 in 10 young people in general deliberately harm themselves.

Two in five (41 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying say they deliberately harm themselves directly because of the bullying, which is consistent with other research that links experience of bullying with increased risk of self-harm.

**I have recently started to cut myself. I have had enough of being hated by so many people for just being who I am.** Rufus, 15, secondary academy (East Midlands)

## Depression

Rates of depression among lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils are high. There is a set of questions widely used by health professionals that helps determine whether someone is depressed. On this basis, **almost half** (46 per cent) of gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying have symptoms consistent with depression. **Thirty five per cent** of gay young people who aren't bullied are also likely to be depressed. This is far higher than NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) estimates of depression in children and young people in general – just five per cent.

Girls are also more likely than boys in general to have depression; **half** (49 per cent) of lesbians and bisexual girls have symptoms consistent with depression compared to **three in ten** (29 per cent) gay and bisexual boys.

Gay pupils who don't feel they have an adult to talk to are much more likely to have symptoms of depression than gay pupils who do have an adult to talk to (54 per cent compared to 37 per cent).

Similarly, **almost half** (46 per cent) of those who experience bullying report having low self-esteem compared to **35 per cent** of gay young people who aren't bullied.

**I believed everything they were saying to me.**

Adam, 16, secondary academy (West Midlands)

# 8 What works well

Schools that take steps to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying, and that positively address and teach about gay people and issues, reduce homophobic bullying and create a positive learning environment for lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils.

## CLEAR AND PROMOTED POLICIES

Lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils explain the ways that their schools communicate a strong anti-homophobic bullying message to them and the difference this makes for them.

Almost one in three (30 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people have seen Stonewall's anti-homophobic bullying posters ('Some People Are Gay Get Over It!') in schools. Gay pupils who see these posters in their school are more likely to 'strongly agree' that they can really be themselves at school (27 per cent compared to 18 per cent). They are also more likely to 'strongly agree' that there's an adult at school they can talk to about being gay (24 per cent compared to 14 per cent).

One in four (26 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils say a teacher has spoken with them about how homophobic bullying is wrong. One in five (19 per cent) say it's written in their school diary. One in six (16 per cent) gay young people have assemblies that address homophobic bullying. One in twelve (eight per cent) have messages about homophobic bullying from their headteachers. Just

three per cent say their parents are sent information on this.

**It's taken for granted that bullying over sexuality, like race, is wrong. Teachers when discussing bullying always mention that it's wrong.**

Kieran, 16, secondary school (Scotland)

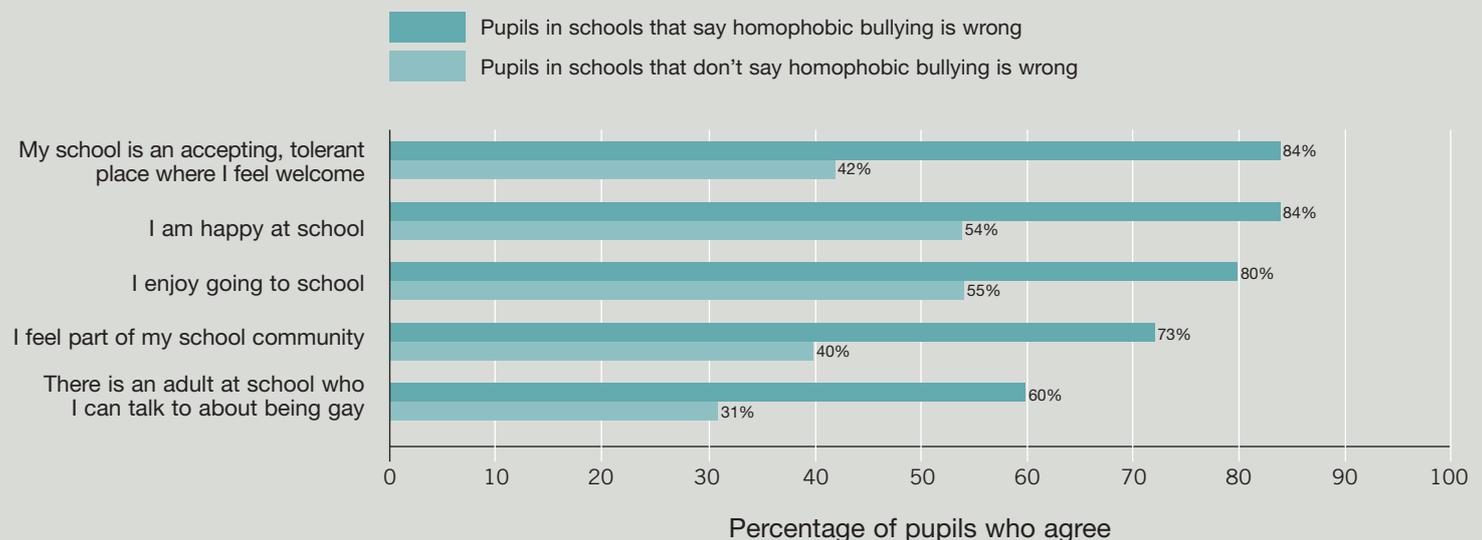
**I was part of an equalities team that challenged homophobia and we wore Stonewall t-shirts and presented assemblies to Years 7, 8 and 9. We also put up Stonewall posters in my school. My headteacher spoke about lesbian, gay and bisexual and trans issues and said that homophobic bullying won't be tolerated. We spoke about how saying 'gay' in a negative way is wrong and some facts and statistics about being lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans. It certainly made a positive difference.**

Val, 16, secondary academy (South West)

Homophobic bullying of gay pupils is lower in schools that explicitly state that homophobic bullying is wrong. Gay pupils in these schools are also twice as likely to feel their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome'. They are also:

- One and a half times more likely to be happy and enjoy going to school
- Twice as likely to say there is an adult at school who they can talk to about being gay
- Nearly twice as likely to feel part of their school community

## CLEAR AND PROMOTED POLICIES



In schools that have sought to eliminate homophobic remarks and where such language is rarely or never heard, there are nearly half as many incidents of homophobic bullying.

**It doesn't happen often, but I challenge it every time I hear the word gay being used in a negative sense. Teachers have always corrected students when they use them as well. I've never or rarely heard 'poof', 'queer' or 'faggot' being used.**

Paul, 16, sixth form college (South West)

## RESPONDING QUICKLY TO HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING AND LANGUAGE WHEN THEY OCCUR

In schools that respond quickly to homophobic bullying, gay pupils are much less likely to be bullied than in schools that don't respond to incidents. Lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils in these schools are also **three times** more likely to feel their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome'. Furthermore they are:

- Twice as likely to be happy at school, and two and a half times more likely to feel they can be themselves at school
- More than twice as likely to feel part of their school community
- Two and a half times more likely to feel there is an adult at school who they can talk to about being gay

**One particular bully was brought in to the headteacher's office. He was told off and the bullying stopped immediately. The headteacher handled it very well.** Glen, 17, secondary school (Scotland)

**Our head of year and teachers have told people that**

**bullying is illegal and have threatened to take it to the police if it carries on.**

Seth, 16, secondary academy (South West)

**A homophobic email was sent around the school so the deputy head sent out another email saying that this was unacceptable, and that they were trying to find the culprits.**

Michelle, 16, sixth form college (Greater London)

In schools where teachers challenge homophobic language every time they hear it, gay pupils are 40 per cent less likely to have been bullied than in schools where teachers never challenge homophobic remarks.

**When teachers hear anti-gay remarks being made they are challenged immediately and then logged and dealt with. Also a detention is given.**

Juliet, 13, private secondary school (South East)

**When a teacher sees or hears somebody use homophobic language, there is often a whole-class discussion about how this is wrong and why it should not be used.** Riley, 14, secondary school (East of England)

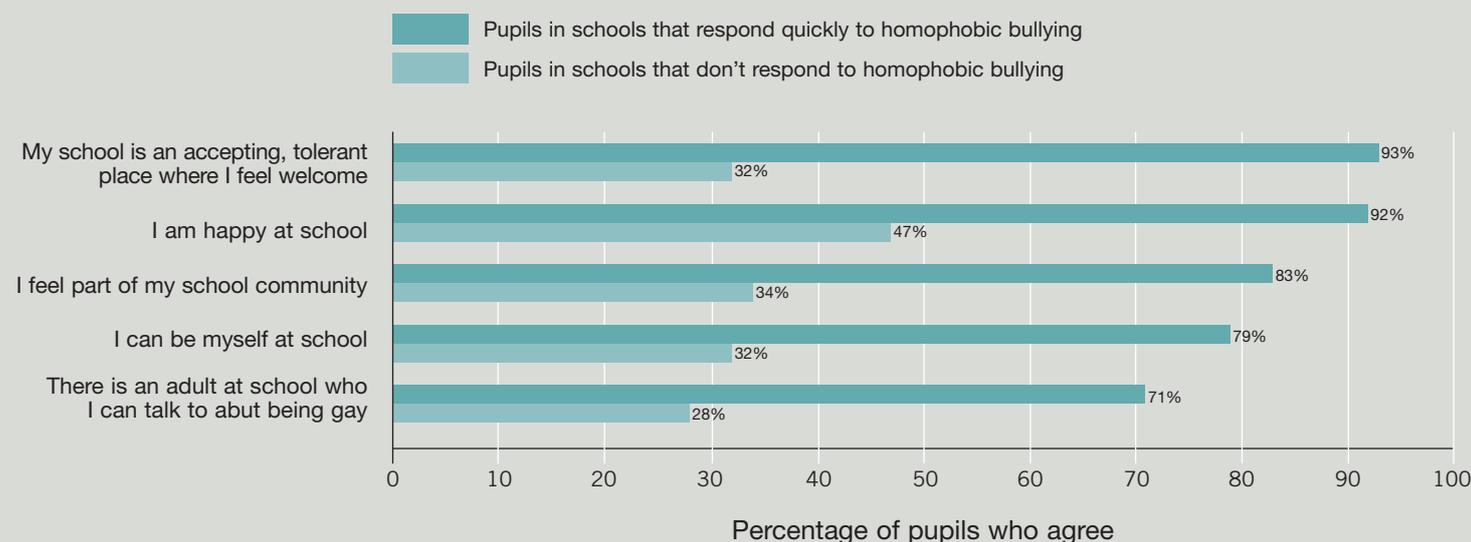
**Someone always says something. Most students are gay supporters, so if a teacher doesn't say something, a student will. I know I've told people off for it.**

Deb, 15, boarding school (Greater London)

## SUPPORTING LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PUPILS

One in six (17 per cent) gay young people say their school has a club specifically for gay pupils and their friends. Gay pupils explained the value of having such a group at their school.

## RESPONDING QUICKLY TO HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING WHEN IT OCCURS



**We have recently started up a Gay Straight Alliance and we get around 20 gay and straight people who come along. We discuss issues of bullying and gay people in the media. This has been helpful to me as the students that run the group are openly gay and I feel like it will all be ok there.**

Linda, 17, sixth form college (South East)

Fewer than half (46 per cent) of gay young people feel there is an adult at school they could talk to about being gay. Just one in three (32 per cent) gay young people know an openly gay teacher. Those who know an openly gay teacher are much more likely to actually speak to a teacher about being gay than those who don't know a gay teacher (41 per cent compared to 26 per cent).

**I talked to my teacher because I was being bullied but I don't know if I'm gay because I don't know yet. She said it was ok, I'd find out when I was older. I think she is gay but I don't know, but she was really nice to me.** Elliot, 11, middle school (Greater London)

**I have had the best support from my English teacher who is openly lesbian, and have a great relationship with her. I can discuss anything that worries me and she offers very good advice.**

Anna, 17, secondary academy (North West)

**Talking to someone you trust allows you to 'let go' of some of the responsibility. It's a little bit of a weight off your shoulders.**

Omar, 17, secondary academy (Yorkshire and the Humber)

Young people also explained the support they get from realistic and positive portrayal in media of gay characters in storylines and famous people, including athletes, authors, musicians and actors.

**The Coronation Street storyline of Sophie and Sian getting together really helped me because it was something my friends were watching and it gave me the courage to tell them about myself.**

Katherine, 16, FE college (West Midlands)

**I was watching Gareth Thomas on Big Brother and admired his story.** Aaron, 15, secondary school (North West)

**Jessie J is a huge inspiration to me. When people say stuff to me, I think of her and tell myself that she got through it, and so can I.**

Laura, 15, faith secondary school (South East)

**When I was a little bit younger, media that showed gay people happy made me feel a lot more positive**

**about the future as at that time (12/13 years old) I didn't feel like being gay would let me live a very happy lifestyle.** Harry, 16, single-sex private school (North West)

## TEACHING POSITIVELY ABOUT LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL ISSUES

Some lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils share the way gay issues are incorporated in their lessons.

Just one in three (33 per cent) gay young people discuss lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education lessons. Just one in five (22 per cent) discuss gay people or their relationships in sex and relationship education. Just one in six (16 per cent) gay young people discuss gay issues in other classes including English, Drama, Ethics, and Languages. One in sixteen (six per cent) gay young people have seen 'FIT', Stonewall's feature film about tackling homophobic bullying, in school.

Only one in three (34 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who are taught about or discuss gay issues in school say this is done in a way they find is positive overall.

Gay young people are much less likely to be bullied in schools that teach and address gay issues positively compared with schools that do so negatively.

**In English, gay issues arose when discussing Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde. In anthropology, gay issues also arose when analysing various world cultures such as the Samoans who openly practice homosexuality in a positive way. Gay people also arose when examining families in the Western World. In Spanish, we had long conversations (in Spanish) on different types of families, and families with two fathers or mothers did come up and were featured in the vocabulary list.**

Timmy, 17, sixth form college (Greater London)

**I think schools should teach or discuss gay issues as it might increase knowledge and decrease the level of bullying in schools.** Ali, 14, secondary school (Scotland)

Pupils who are taught positively about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are also much more likely to feel part of their school community (87 per cent compared to 55 per cent) and to feel that their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome' (94 per cent compared to 64 per cent).

# 9 Recommendations: Schools

## 1 GO BACK TO BASICS

Homophobic bullying of gay pupils is lower in schools that explicitly state that homophobic bullying is wrong. In schools where homophobic remarks are rarely or never heard, there are nearly half as many incidents of homophobic bullying.

- **Schools should have clear and promoted policies on tackling homophobic bullying, which takes place in the classroom, the corridor and beyond the school gates. All instances of homophobic language should be challenged and pupils made to understand why using it is wrong.**

## 2 DEAL WITH INCIDENTS SWIFTLY AND CLEARLY

Fewer than a third of gay pupils say their school responds quickly to homophobic bullying when it occurs. When young people tell someone about the bullying, in almost two thirds of cases nothing is done to stop it.

- **Every incident of homophobic bullying should be taken seriously and quickly acted upon, with clear and consistent sanctions for those responsible. Persistent bullying should be referred up the school hierarchy – involving senior management and parents as necessary.**

## 3 LEAD FROM THE TOP

Fewer than one in ten gay pupils have had messages about homophobic bullying from their headteachers. Seventeen per cent of gay pupils report that teachers and other school staff make homophobic comments.

- **Headteachers, governors, academy chain directors and other school leaders should make sure tackling homophobic bullying is the responsibility of the entire school community. As a priority, school leaders should make sure homophobic language is not used by members of staff.**

## 4 REMEMBER THE BIGGER PICTURE

Three in five gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that this impacts on their school work. One in three gay pupils who experience homophobic bullying change their plans for future education because of it.

- **Ofsted now looks to schools to combat homophobic bullying as part of their inspection framework. Schools should see tackling homophobic bullying as part of their wider drive to improve behaviour and boost aspiration, standards and attainment.**

## 5 EQUIP YOUR STAFF

Three in five lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that teachers who witness the bullying never intervene. Only ten per cent of gay pupils report that teachers challenge homophobic language every time they hear it.

- **Schools should make sure teachers are trained on how to combat homophobic bullying and to support lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. This should also be part of continuing professional development (CPD) – schools should make sure external CPD providers are equipped to train staff on combatting homophobic bullying. Schools should look to and learn from schools that are already tackling homophobic bullying successfully.**

## 6 INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE

Almost three in five gay pupils who are bullied say other students who witness homophobic bullying never intervene. More than half of gay pupils say other pupils never challenge homophobic language when they hear it.

- **Schools should actively involve young people in the design of anti-bullying policies and encourage them to take ownership of anti-bullying initiatives to create an environment in which young people themselves reject and challenge homophobic bullying.**

## 7 ENCOURAGE ROLE MODELS

More than half of gay young people don't feel there is an adult at school who they can talk to about being gay and almost two in five who experience homophobic bullying never tell anyone about it – often because they feel ashamed.

- **Teachers and school staff who visibly challenge homophobic bullying and language and who positively address gay issues will make young people confident to approach adults at school. Schools should also support gay staff who want to be open about their sexual orientation.**

## 8 BROADEN THE CURRICULUM

More than half of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are never taught anything about gay issues in their lessons. More than four in five are never taught in school about biological or physical aspects of same-sex relationships.

- **Schools and academy chains should exercise their greater flexibility over the curriculum as an opportunity to integrate sexual orientation issues across their teaching. Schools should also provide gay young people with information and support to help them stay healthy and safe.**

## 9 PROVIDE HELP AND SUPPORT

Two in five lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils who experience homophobic bullying attempt or think about taking their own life directly because of the bullying.

- **School nurses should make clear that young people can speak to them in confidence about their sexual orientation. They should be trained to support the specific needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people and be aware of the particular mental health issues which they may face.**

## 10 GO BEYOND TACKLING BULLYING

Pupils who are taught positively about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are much more likely to feel part of their school community and to feel that their school is 'an accepting, tolerant place where I feel welcome'.

- **Good schools do much more than just tackle homophobic bullying. They create a school environment in which difference and diversity are promoted and celebrated across whole school community.**

# Recommendations: Key partners

## THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION:

- Continue to make tackling homophobic bullying a key priority and communicate this priority to schools through clear guidance. This should include sample policies, advice on monitoring and recording incidents and good practice case studies.
- Make sure that the new national curriculum is reflective of the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. At the same time encourage schools themselves to use their new freedom over the curriculum to integrate sexual orientation issues into teaching and learning.
- Encourage primary schools to discuss 'different families' as part of their teaching, enabling pupils to gain age appropriate awareness of the diversity of family life before entering secondary school.
- Through the Teaching Agency make sure that high quality training on combatting homophobic bullying and supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people is part of all teachers' initial training.
- Through the National College create opportunities for school leaders to share their experiences and take lessons from each other on tackling homophobic bullying in their schools.
- Alongside the New Schools Network make sure that new free schools recognise the importance of combatting homophobic bullying and supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people when establishing policy and procedures.

## OFSTED:

- Continue to make sure that a school's effectiveness in combatting homophobic bullying and creating a safe learning environment for all young people is considered as part of the inspection framework.
- Highlight good practice and areas for improvement in this area in order to give schools goals for the future and allow them to learn from the success of others.
- Make sure that all inspectors are trained on sexual orientation issues and on how to measure a school's effectiveness in combatting homophobic bullying.
- When inspecting initial teacher training providers make sure they are delivering training which prepares new teachers to combat homophobic bullying.

## **LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND ACADEMY CHAINS:**

- **Make sure that all of their schools are explicitly aware of the importance of tackling homophobic language and bullying.**
- **Facilitate opportunities for schools to support one another in this area and identify good practice primary and secondary schools which can share their expertise.**
- **Provide guidance to their schools on recording and monitoring incidents of homophobic bullying and measure progress on an authority or organisation wide level.**
- **Develop links with those public and private sector services which can support their schools in combatting homophobic bullying.**
- **Link up with lesbian, gay and bisexual groups and youth groups that provide support for schools and individuals on how to tackle bullying.**
- **Make sure that their schools have access to support, training and advice in dealing with homophobic bullying and supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people.**

# THE SCHOOL REPORT **In the last five years**

Since this study was last conducted in 2007, the rate of homophobic bullying of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people has decreased to **55 per cent**, down from **65 per cent**. However, homophobic language and remarks are just as common today as they were five years ago.

**Twice** as many gay pupils today report their schools say homophobic bullying is wrong – **50 per cent**, up from **25 per cent** in 2007. Teacher intervention in the use of homophobic language has also improved; the number of pupils who report that teachers never respond to homophobic language has halved.

Although too many gay pupils (37 per cent) still feel unable to speak out when they experience homophobic bullying, this is down from **58 per cent** in 2007.

Appropriate teaching about lesbian, gay and bisexual people remains patchy. In 2007 **seven in ten** gay pupils had never seen gay issues addressed at school, today this has decreased to **53 per cent**.

More gay young people now feel they have an adult they can talk to about being gay. In 2007 **60 per cent** of gay young people said they had no adult to talk to, now this is **25 per cent**.

## THE STUDY

*Stonewall commissioned the Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge to conduct a survey with young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (or think they might be) on their experiences in secondary schools and colleges across Britain. Between November 2011 and February 2012, 1,614 lesbian, gay and bisexual young people aged between 11 and 19 completed an online survey. Eighty five per cent of respondents are from England, ten per cent from Scotland and five per cent from Wales. Fifty four per cent of respondents are girls and 45 per cent are boys. Two per cent identify as transgender. Thirty five per cent of respondents identify as gay males and 22 per cent as gay females. Twenty three per cent identify as bisexual females and seven per cent as bisexual males. Nine per cent of female respondents and three per cent of males don't define their sexual orientation as any of the preceding, which includes young people who are unsure or questioning their sexual orientation. Ninety two per cent of respondents are white and eight per cent are black or minority ethnic. Eighteen per cent of respondents identify as having a disability or long-term physical or mental health issue. Twenty nine per cent of respondents say they have a religious belief.*

*Sixty five per cent of respondents attended a secondary school, 16 per cent a sixth form college and 13 per cent an FE college. Twelve per cent were in private schools or colleges. Twenty five per cent attended an academy. Eleven per cent attended a faith school. Nine per cent attended an all-girls school, five per cent an all-boys school. Five per cent attended a boarding school and two per cent a pupil referral unit (PRU). Nineteen per cent of respondents had recently left school and are now at university and a further eight per cent recently left school and are now not in further education. Those who recently left shared their experiences in their last school or college. All differences referred to in the report are statistically significant.*

# Resources and Support

Stonewall runs two bespoke programmes designed to specifically help schools and local authorities address many of the issues raised in this report:

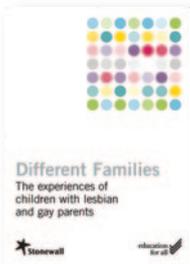


Stonewall's **School Champions** programme provides tailored support and guidance to individual primary and secondary schools and academies, helping them to develop strategies to challenge homophobic bullying and celebrate difference. Schools which are part of the programme work with Stonewall and each other to address homophobic bullying and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment for all children and young people. For more information visit [www.stonewall.org.uk/schoolchampions](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/schoolchampions) or email [schoolchampions@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:schoolchampions@stonewall.org.uk)



Our **Education Champions** programme provides tailored support to local authorities in their work to prevent and tackle homophobic bullying in their schools. Through this programme, local authorities work with Stonewall and each other to establish ways in which they can address homophobic bullying and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment for all young people. For more information visit [www.stonewall.org.uk/educationchampions](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/educationchampions) or email [educationchampions@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:educationchampions@stonewall.org.uk)

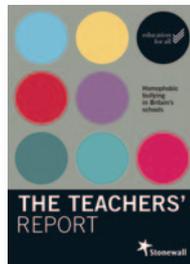
**Stonewall also has a wide range of resources available to schools which can help address homophobic bullying and support lesbian, gay and bisexual young people and help to tackle many of the issues outlined in here**



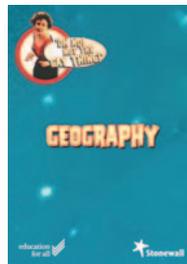
*Different Families:* the experiences of children with gay parents (2010)



*Different Families* posters help schools to celebrate difference



*The Teachers' Report* (2009) YouGov polling of over 2,000 primary and secondary school staff about homophobic bullying



'Oh no! Not the gay thing!' – a pack with ideas on how to address lesbian, gay and bisexual issues through the curriculum



*Celebrating difference:* Challenging homophobia in primary schools (2011) 28 minute primary school staff training DVD

*Spell It Out* – our secondary school staff training DVD



*FIT* – Stonewall's feature-film for secondary schools



*Role Models* – A collection of 17 personal stories from successful and inspiring lesbian, gay and bisexual role models leading in a range of industries



*Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!* posters, postcards and stickers



*Education Guides* – including *Challenging homophobic language*; *Supporting lesbian, gay and bisexual young people*; *Including different families*; *Working with faith communities* and *Effective school leadership*

**For more information or to order any of these resources visit [www.stonewall.org.uk/atschool](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/atschool)**

# THE SCHOOL REPORT

The experiences of gay young people  
in Britain's schools in 2012

I'm not going to university anymore  
because I'm too worried it'll  
just be the same.

GRACE, 17, sixth form college (South East)

I feel that I don't want to carry on in  
school if this is what I have to put up  
with and hide what I feel all the time.

SIMON, 14, secondary school (South West)

I was a straight A\* student. I got  
100 per cent in my science exams,  
I'm really proud of that. But because of  
bullying my classwork and coursework  
has suffered, leaving me with  
a lower grade, about a C/B.

IAN, 16, secondary school (South East)

We were told that homosexuality was a  
sin, disgusting and unnatural in our  
Religious Education classes.

SADIE, now 19, faith secondary school (East of England)