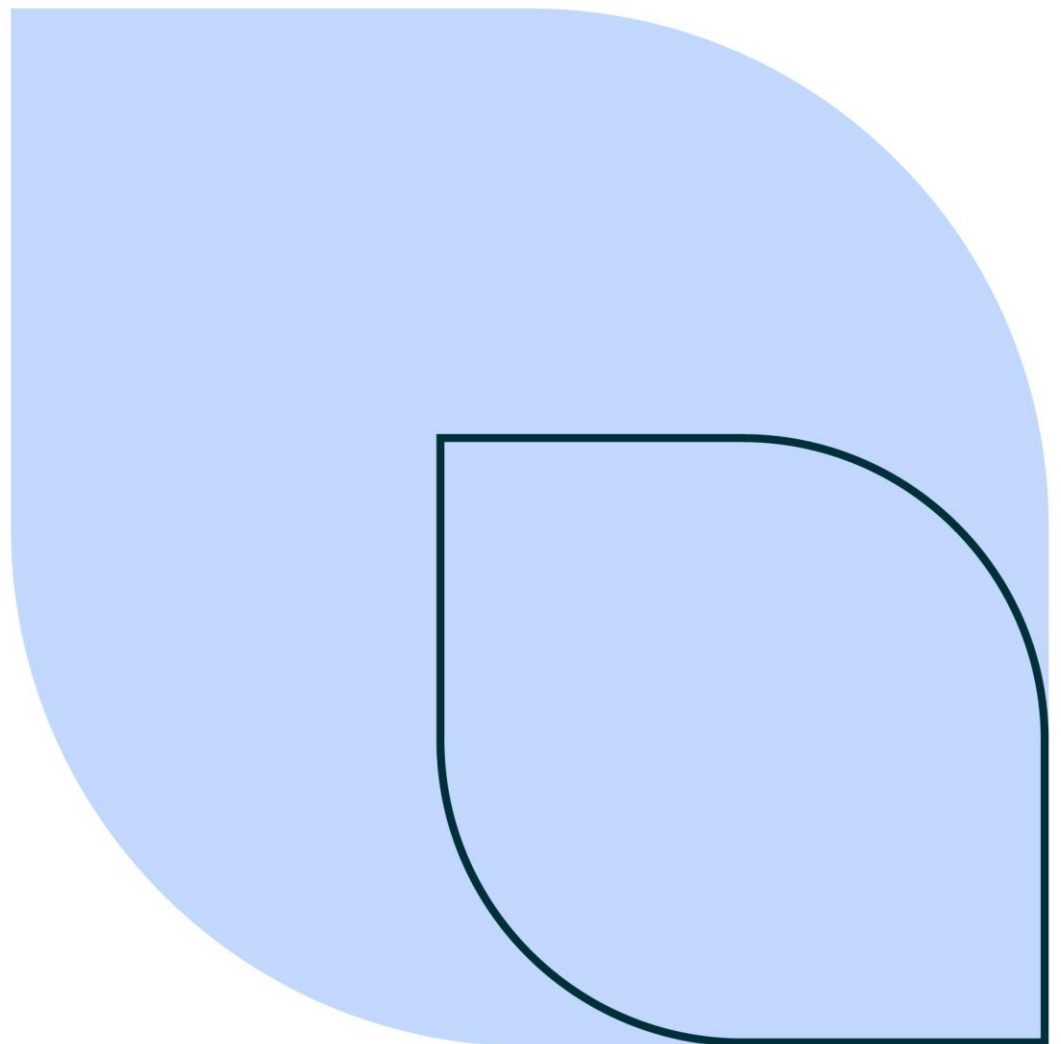


Flourishing for All: Anti-bullying Guidance for Church of England Schools

September 2024 (amended March 2025)





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Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

² The Church of England Education Office, *Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System*, page 9 [Internet], Available at [Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf \(contentfiles.net\)](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf)



Introduction

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

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

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

Specific guidance on the most contested area of the debate has only recently been addressed through the publication of the Department for Education's draft guidance on Gender Questioning Children⁴. This was followed by the publication in April 2024 of the final report and recommendations to NHS England from Dr Hilary Cass in her role as Chair of the Independent Review of gender identity services for children and young people⁵.

³ Anti Bullying Alliance, Pupil bullying, wellbeing and school experiences in schools in England , 2023, [Internet], Available at : [Pupil bullying, wellbeing and school experiences in schools in England 2023_0.pdf](https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/Pupil_bullying_wellbeing_and_school_experiences_in_schools_in_England_2023_0.pdf) (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

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

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



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

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

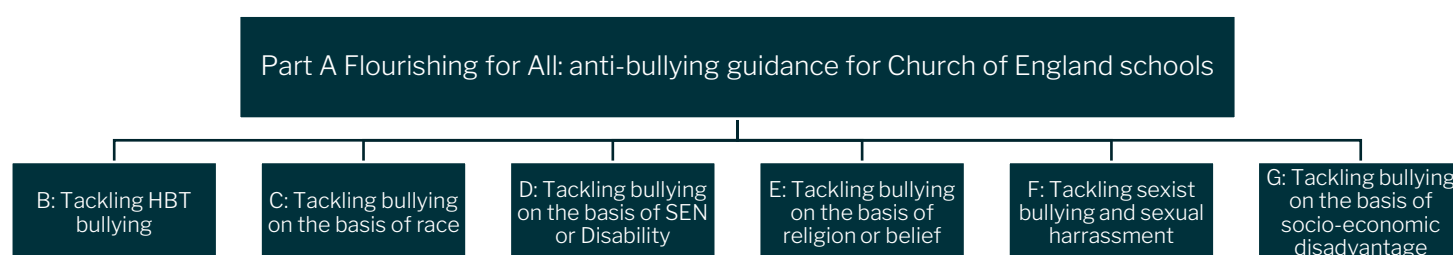
Schools should and will refer to the government guidance for appropriate detail in every area, but our hope for Church schools is that these resources will enable them to implement that guidance in the context of the Church of England Vision for Education which sets out a deeply Christian approach and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

Revd Canon Nigel Genders CBE
Chief Education Officer



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

This suite of guidance is designed to enable Church of England schools to understand how to tackle different types of bullying. It explains how the Church of England *Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good*⁶ and subsequent documentation require schools to take seriously any harm caused towards its pupils, as well as the adults within the school community. Beyond this, it outlines the importance of focusing specifically on different groups whom research has shown are at higher risk of bullying than other pupils.⁷ The expectation for Church schools⁸ is that their approach to protecting vulnerable pupils should emanate from their Christian vision to secure **flourishing for all**.



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

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

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

⁸ Where we have used the term ‘Church schools’ this means Church of England schools specifically



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

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

Part A Executive Summary

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



1. Flourishing in schools: our approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ The Church of England Education Office, *Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System*, page 12 [Internet], Available at [Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf \(contentfiles.net\)](https://cofefoundation.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf)

¹⁵ The Church of England Education Office, *Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System*, page 4 [Internet], Available at [Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf \(contentfiles.net\)](https://cofefoundation.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Our_Hope_for_a_Flourishing_Schools_System.pdf)



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

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

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

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

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

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

Be Present - Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Difference Course [\[Internet\]. Available from: https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/priorities/reconciliation/difference-course](https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/priorities/reconciliation/difference-course)

¹⁷ The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 12 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

¹⁸ The Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System, page 9 [Internet], Available at [Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System.pdf \(contentfiles.net\)](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf).



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

'Life in All its Fullness'

Full flourishing is only possible when each and every member of our school communities:



- Experiences true **belonging** – knowing they are welcome, completely included, valued and celebrated
- Finds every possible avenue of academic and vocational **progress and success** open to them, without needing to overcome institutional barriers
- Feels totally **safe and secure** wherever they are, and fully connected with others
- Is able to meaningfully **participate** in the life of their school – with their voice heard and their ideas acted upon
- Believes that a **hope-filled future** can and will be theirs, because they see themselves represented in all aspects of school life, particularly in leadership

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

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

¹⁹ The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 11 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

²⁰ Advance HA, Education for Mental Health Toolkit, [Internet], Available here : [Education for Mental Health Toolkit - Psychologically safe learning environment | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/education-for-mental-health-toolkit):

²¹ Leeds Beckett University, Emotionally Based School Avoidance: How to get persistently absent children back into school, p10 [Internet] Available here : [EBSA Guide | Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools | Leeds Beckett University](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/eb-sa-guide)



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

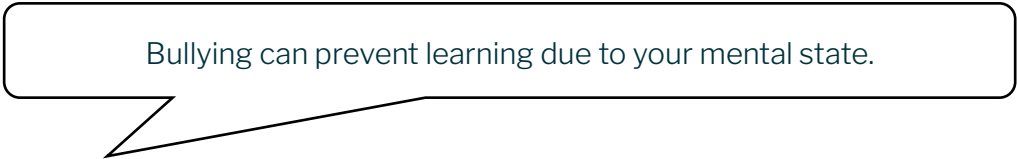
2.1 Prevention of Bullying

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

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

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

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



Bullying can prevent learning due to your mental state.

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

²² Gov.uk, Bullying - a definition, [Internet], Available at [Bullying at school: Bullying - a definition - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bullying-a-definition)

²³ The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 11 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

²⁴ The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 7 [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

²⁵ The Anti Bullying Alliance, The Impact of Bullying, [Internet], Available at : [The impact of bullying \(anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk\)](https://www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk/)



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

Bullying is obviously extremely harmful to the victims, but it also harms the perpetrators. Research by the Anti-bullying Alliance suggests that those who engage in bullying are ‘the most likely to report poor experiences at school’.²⁶ By engaging in bullying, a person is causing damage to their victims, their community – fracturing relationships and destroying any sense of ‘living well together’ – and ultimately to themselves. Jesus’ imperative to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ (Matthew 7:12) clearly applies to the way we are to treat one another with dignity and respect. It is also worth being mindful that this can only be enacted if a person has the sufficient self-worth to recognise what love actually looks like. There are no excuses for bullying, but for Church schools – who often employ restorative justice approaches – there is a mandate to engage with the perpetrators to understand the behaviour and work with them to put an end to it. There are many reasons why someone might engage in bullying behaviour. As well as causing fear, bullying can often emanate from fear; fear of ‘those who seem ... dangerously different’,²⁷ fear of not joining in with others who are bullying or fear of exposure, being seen as they truly are. The Bible tells us ‘there is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear’ (1 John 4:18). School cultures focused on the flourishing of all prioritise belonging over distance,²⁸ embrace over exclusion²⁹, dialogue over division and love over fear.

2.2 Forms of Bullying

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

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

²⁶ The Anti Bullying Alliance, Pupil bullying, wellbeing and school experiences in schools in England, page 4, [Internet], Available at : [Pupil bullying, wellbeing and school experiences in schools in England 2023 0.pdf \(anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk\)](https://www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk/Pupil%20bullying,%20wellbeing%20and%20school%20experiences%20in%20schools%20in%20England%202023%200.pdf)

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

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

²⁹ Ibid



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

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

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

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

With the constant rise of the online world, children and young people are often unable to escape bullying which can follow them wherever they are. Moreover, studies are beginning to show how reducing smartphone usage can decrease instances of bullying.³²³³ Schools should be very mindful of the ways in which smartphone usage can contribute to bullying, both in and out of school, and give due regard to this in setting and reviewing their policies around mobile devices. Whilst mobile devices

³⁰ Gov. uk, Behaviour in schools: sanctions and exclusions, [Internet], Available at : [Behaviour in schools: sanctions and exclusions: School behaviour policy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/school-behaviour-policy)

³¹ Anti Bullying Alliance, What is online bullying?, [Internet], Available at : [What is online bullying? \(anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk\)](https://www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk/what-is-online-bullying/)

³² Emerald Insight, Banning mobile phones in schools: evidence from regional-level policies in Spain, [Internet], Available at : [Banning mobile phones in schools: evidence from regional-level policies in Spain | Emerald Insight](https://www.emeraldinsight.com/insight/banning-mobile-phones-in-schools-evidence-from-regional-level-policies-in-spain)

³³ UNESCO, Global education monitoring report, 2023: technology in education: a tool on whose terms?, [Internet], Available at : [Global education monitoring report, 2023: technology in education: a tool on whose terms? - UNESCO Digital Library](https://unesco.org/en/digital-library/global-education-monitoring-report-2023-technology-in-education-a-tool-on-whose-terms/)



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

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

3. Church schools' duties with regards to bullying

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

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

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

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

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

³⁴ Miller, P., Understanding EDIJ in Education, 2022, Academic Press.

³⁵ House of Commons Library, Hate Crime Statistics, January 2024, [Internet], Available at : [Hate Crime Statistics - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

³⁶ Home Office, Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition, November 2023, [Internet] Available at : [Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



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

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

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

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

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

3.2.1 *The Equality Act 2010*

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

The nine protected characteristics under the Act are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment⁴⁰

³⁷ United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, [Internet] Available at :

https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf

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

³⁹ Ezekiel 34:28

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



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

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

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

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

3.2.2 Public Sector Equality Duty

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

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

⁴¹ Department for Education, The Equality Act 2010 and schools, [Internet] Available at : [Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/431211/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf)



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

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

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

3.2.3 The Education and Inspections Act 2006

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

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



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

3.2.4 Equality information and objectives

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

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

3.2.5 Criminal law

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

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

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

⁴² Department for Education, Preventing and tackling bullying Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2017, page 5 [Internet] Available at : [Preventing and tackling bullying \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://preventing-bullying.service.gov.uk/)

⁴³ Gov. uk, What academies and further education colleges must or should publish online, [Internet], Available at : [What academies and further education colleges must or should publish online - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-academies-and-further-education-colleges-must-or-should-publish-online); see also [EHRC. Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England, April 2023 \[Internet\] Available at: Technical guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/technical-guidance/technical-guidance-on-the-public-sector-equality-duty-england)

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling Bullying, 2017, page 6 [Internet] Available at : [Preventing bullying - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://preventing-bullying.gov.uk/)



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

The expectation to address any bullying behaviour, especially that which occurs on the basis of a protected characteristic (e.g. towards SEND pupils or those who are LGB/GQ⁴⁶) is threaded throughout Section 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), and is therefore essential to a school's safeguarding policies and procedures.⁴⁷ Bullying towards pupils who have SEN or a disability, towards those who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ, racial discrimination and sexualised bullying as part of sexual harassment are all specifically outlined within KCSiE. There are particular considerations for the online world, and the prominence of cyberbullying. KCSiE also outlines the duties of schools with regards to differing types of bullying under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED – see 3.2.2 above).⁴⁸

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

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

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

⁴⁶ In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024), this document uses LGB/GQ throughout to refer to children and young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or gender questioning

⁴⁷ Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024 [Internet] Available at : [Keeping children safe in education 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121251/Keeping-children-safe-in-education-2024.pdf)

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p28

⁴⁹ Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling Bullying, July 2017, Page 6, [Internet] Available at : [Preventing and tackling bullying \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121251/Preventing-and-tackling-bullying-2017.pdf)

⁵⁰ Farrer and co, Addressing child-on-child abuse: a resource for schools and colleges, September 2023, [Internet] Available at : [addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf \(farrer.co.uk\)](https://farrer.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf)



3.4 Ofsted

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

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

4. Specific expectations for Church of England schools

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

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

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

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

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

⁵¹ Gov. uk, Education Inspection Framework, [Internet], Available at : [Education inspection framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/education-inspection-framework)

⁵² OFSTED, School Inspection Handbook, April 2024, Section 326, [Internet] Available at : [School inspection handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\) Section 326](https://www.gov.uk/school-inspection-handbook)



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.1 Intersectionality

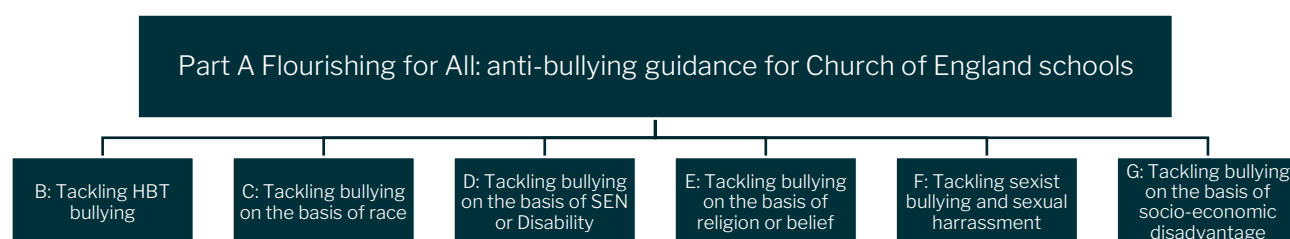
It is vital to pay careful attention to the cumulative impact of discrimination and bullying on young people. Where a young person has more than one characteristic on the basis of which they can



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

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

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



5.2 Proposed Timeline for Publication

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

⁵³ University of Oxford, Anti-Racism Resources March 2023: Intersectionality of Privilege, March 2023, [Internet], Available at : [Anti-Racism Resources March 2023: Intersectionality of Privilege – Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics \(DPAG\) \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.dpag.ox.ac.uk/anti-racism-resources-march-2023/intersectionality-of-privilege)



6. Part A Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

September 2024



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

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

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

Part B Executive Summary

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

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

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

⁵⁹ Gov.uk Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2024, [Internet] Available at: [Keeping children safe in education 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/95444/Keeping-children-safe-in-education-2024.pdf), p55



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶³ Including [Final Report – Cass Review \(independent-review.uk\)](https://www.independent-review.uk)



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

As outlined in Part A, bullying of any kind can have devastating effects on the personal wellbeing, identity-formation and self-esteem of any child or young person. This in turn has a significant impact on academic and vocational achievement, and on the wider flourishing of each person. Data shows that pupils who are (or perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning are particularly at risk of bullying in school.⁶⁴ Despite progress in legislation to protect LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults, there continue to be tragic examples of bullying, harm and hate towards them and, in the very worst circumstances, the death of young people who have identified as (or have been perceived to be) LGB/GQ. Studies indicate that almost half of pupils who are LGB/GQ feel unsafe at school, and are around twice as likely as their peers to be bullied. Pupils with additional protected characteristics, such as those with a disability or those from UKME/GMH backgrounds are even more likely to experience bullying.⁶⁵

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

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

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

⁶⁴ Anti Bullying Alliance, Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying , [Internet] Available at : [Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying \(anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk\)](https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/)

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying (UNESCO, 2012), p16.

⁶⁷ Cowie H, Myers C. School Bullying and Mental Health. Routledge 2018, p3.

⁶⁸ Ibid p38

⁶⁹ [Peer Bullying Victimization Trajectories for Sexually and Gender Diverse Youth from Early Childhood to Late Adolescence | Journal of Youth and Adolescence \(springer.com\)](#); [Bullying Victimization among LGBTQ Youth: Current and Future Directions - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁷⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying (UNESCO, 2012), p16.



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

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

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

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

2.1 HBT Bullying

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

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



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

2.1.1 Use of Language

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Our survey of pupils found that:⁷³

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

We should expect pupils of all ages to use kind words with their peers. It is therefore important to challenge harmful and discriminatory language or behaviour at any age. Otherwise, pupils grow up believing that it is acceptable to treat children and young people who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ or adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+ this way. Schools are very skilled at teaching children that harming another person with words or actions is unacceptable in a completely age-appropriate way. Remaining silent on the topic, or avoiding it, can send a hurtful message to LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults.

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

2.1.2 Online/ Cyber bullying

A relatively recent but serious phenomena impacting the lives of children and young people is the pervasive influence of smartphones and the impact of their use on wellbeing and mental health.⁷⁴ This has repercussions across all the areas that will be considered in this suite of documents.

⁷³ NSE Survey of Church secondary school pupils, May 2024

⁷⁴ [Cyberbullying and Children and Young People's Mental Health: A Systematic Map of Systematic Reviews | Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking \(liebertpub.com\)](https://www.liebertpub.com/cyberpsychology/Cyberbullying_and_Children_and_Young_People's_Mental_Health:_A_Systematic_Map_of_Systematic_Reviews)



Cyberbullying is a prevalent form of bullying towards children and young people who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ. Around a quarter of children and young people who are LGB/GQ are reported to have experienced cyberbullying.⁷⁵ Cyberbullying occurs online, predominantly through social networks, instant messaging, picture/video messaging and email. It can involve the posting or sending of abusive messages directly to victims, as well as sharing messages, videos or images to spread rumours and comments among a peer group. Due to the anonymity that social media affords, it can be very difficult to identify and permanently stop people from sending HBT bullying messages and offensive materials to LGB/GQ young people. As a result, they can feel under attack in what should be a safe space, such as their own home. Depending on how far they have shared their sexual orientation or gender questioning, it may be particularly difficult for them to report that this is occurring. This can have a profoundly negative impact on a person and significantly damage their mental and emotional wellbeing. Some LGB/GQ young people may rely on social media to connect with other young people who share the same or similar identity as themselves.⁷⁶ To this end, social media and the internet can be a lifeline for LGB/GQ young people, especially if they are from small communities where they are both a minority and hyper-visible. Therefore, to experience bullying in this forum can increase their vulnerability by inserting a highly fearful element into what can often be a vital and extremely valuable space.

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

2.1.3 Physical bullying

Physical harm continues to be a very real experience for some pupils who are (or perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning.⁷⁷ As with any child or adult, physical harm must never be tolerated. It might take the form of repeated tripping, spitting, hitting or kicking – often in low visibility areas. This can happen both on school grounds, or outside of school (e.g. on the journey home). Schools have the power to challenge and act on this behaviour, whether it happens at school or beyond the school gates, and it is essential that they do so.

2.1.4 Sexual Harassment and Child-on-Child Abuse

‘Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex from primary to secondary stage and into colleges. It can also occur online. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.’⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Cowie H, Myers C. *School Bullying and Mental Health*. Routledge 2018, p36.

⁷⁶ NSPCC, Safeguarding LGBTQ+ children and young people, [Internet] Available at : [Safeguarding LGBTQ+ children and young people | NSPCC Learning](#)

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Department for Education, *Keeping children safe in education*, 2023, [Internet] Available at : [Keeping children safe in education 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) p15



Evidence indicates that young people who are LGB/GQ are at higher risk of sexual harm than other young people, and therefore require tailored pastoral care and protection from their school.⁷⁹

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

2.2 Bullying towards Gender Questioning Children and Transgender Adults

Within our schools, we know that there are pupils who are questioning their gender. Whilst the recently released DfE draft guidance 'Gender Questioning Children' (2023)⁸⁰ advises how schools should respond to pupils who are gender questioning both now and in the future, we recognise that there are pupils in school who have already socially transitioned and are now presenting as a different gender to their biological sex. Additionally, there are transgender adults amongst the adults (e.g. staff or parents/ carers) within our school communities.

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

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

Consequently, schools must challenge:

- Discriminatory and dehumanising language towards gender questioning children, those who have already socially transitioned and transgender adults
- Repeated mis-naming which is deliberate and intended to cause harm⁸¹
- Any physical harm or sexual harassment
- Cyberbullying towards a child or young person because they are gender questioning or an adult who is transgender

Additionally, Church schools should make every effort to ensure that when following the government's draft guidance and making any of the alternative arrangements specified for gender

⁷⁹ NSPCC research cites Barnardo's and Fox, 2016; McGeeney et al, 2017; Xu and Zheng, 2014

⁸⁰ [Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/Gender-Questioning-Children-non-statutory-guidance.pdf)

⁸¹ Page 13 in [Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/Gender-Questioning-Children-non-statutory-guidance.pdf) states that bullying must not be tolerated, and distinguishes this from 'honest mistakes'. In order to not cause harm by using a pronoun which a child does not identify with, schools are encouraged to use names instead. Informal name changes are permitted.



questioning pupils (such as individual changing rooms, toilets and showers in school or sleeping arrangements on residential trips), they are careful not to do so in a way that reinforces any sense of exclusion a pupil may feel by being singled out. As the Vision for Education states, we are to follow the example of Jesus who 'paid special attention to the... excluded.'⁸²

Under current government guidance, schools are advised to undertake a period of 'watchful waiting' following any request from a gender questioning child or young person to socially transition at school.⁸³ If a school follows this path, it is critical that the school proactively engages with the child or young person so they know they have been heard, and ensures that they are kept safe from any harm or bullying behaviours by making planned and regular checks. They should not wait for bullying to be reported, but understand this is a particularly vulnerable time for that child or young person. Whenever possible, this should include working with the child or young person's family (unless to do so would place the child or young person at risk).

There is evidence that bullying instances against gender questioning children and transgender adults are extremely high. As Part A of *Flourishing for All* explains, hate crime has risen exponentially over the last ten years in the UK. In 2022-23, transgender hate crime had increased by 11% compared to the previous year.⁸⁴ Given that not all LGB/GQ children and young people or LGBT+ adults feel safe enough to report discrimination or harm, it is likely that the reality is even higher than this. It is therefore important for all pupils, growing up in a society where harm towards people who are transgender is increasing, to be supported by their school to be respectful to those who are questioning their gender, and to those who have transitioned.

2.3 Bullying towards LGBT+ adults

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

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

⁸² The Church of England Education Office, Church of England Vision For Education, Page 11, [Internet] Autumn 2016, Available at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/1687943692_2016-church-of-england-vision-for-education-web-final.pdf

⁸³ Department for Education, Gender Questioning Children, 2023, Page 10, [Internet], Available at : [Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/Gender-Questioning-Children-non-statutory-guidance-2023.pdf)

⁸⁴ Gov.uk, Hate Crime, England and Wales 2022-2023, 2023, [Internet] Available at : [Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/Hate-crime-England-and-Wales-2022-to-2023-second-edition-GOV.UK.pdf)



Due to the social justice work in the UK that has led to legal safeguards and formal protection for LGBT+ people over the last 50 years, LGBT+ adults enjoy greater freedom and acceptance in modern Britain.⁸⁵ However, bullying and harm towards LGB/GQ pupils and LGBT+ adults continues both in society at large, and sadly, within schools – including Church schools. It is therefore important that Church schools are explicit and transparent in their approach to tackling bullying behaviour towards the LGBT+ adults in their communities, along with their pupils.

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

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

It is important to note that even in the context of these debates taking place, and the often strongly held views being expressed on all sides, there remains a clear commitment by the Church of England to eradicate bullying and harm caused to those who are LGBTQI+. In February 2017, following a debate in the General Synod of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury stated: ‘No person is a problem, or an issue. People are made in the image of God. All of us, without exception, are loved and called in Christ. There are no ‘problems’, there are simply people... *The way forward needs to be about love, joy and celebration of our humanity; of our creation in the image of God, of our belonging to Christ – all of us, without exception, without exclusion.*’⁸⁶

Later that year, General Synod passed a motion on welcoming and affirming transgender people in their parish church.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Such as the removal of Section 28, Gay Christian movement of the 1970s, lifting the ban on lesbians, gay men and bi people serving in the armed forces, equality in the age of consent, the Civil Partnership Act and the introduction of The Equality Act.

⁸⁶ Archbishop of Canterbury : Statement from the Archbishop of Canterbury following today’s General Synod, 2017, [Internet] Available at : [Statement from the Archbishop of Canterbury following today’s General Synod | The Archbishop of Canterbury](#)

⁸⁷ Church of England, Welcoming Transgender People, 2017, [Internet], Available at : [Welcoming Transgender People | The Church of England](#)



More recently, in February 2023, the General Synod 'voted to "lament and repent" of the failure of the Church to welcome 'LGBTQI+ people' and for the harm that LGBTQI+ people have experienced – and continue to experience – in churches.'⁸⁸

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

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

3.1 Learning to live with difference

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

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

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

⁸⁸ Church of England, Prayers for God's blessing for same-sex couples take step forward after Synod debate, 2023, [Internet], Available at : [Prayers for God's blessing for same-sex couples take step forward after Synod debate | The Church of England](#)



In order to do this, a key starting point is learning throughout their schooling how to explore issues around difference safely, within a supportive environment. Difference for Schools⁸⁹ is a free short course that has been developed for primary and secondary school pupils and aims to address the complexities and divisions of our society by equipping young people with the tools to navigate difference, disagreement and fracture.

These materials promote three habits to transform everyday relationships:

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

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

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

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

When handling controversial issues in a classroom or even a parent or governors' consultation, Professor Trevor Cooling's metaphor of a Bedouin 'tent of meeting' may be a helpful model for Church schools. This strategy asks teachers or facilitators to host a space where different views can be aired and honoured: 'a place of hospitality, welcome and respectful engagement, sacred and mutual, but not neutral to its own Christian values, whilst being genuinely open to the free expression of engagement'.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Church of England, Difference, [Internet] Available at : [Secondary Schools - Difference: Make your faith count in a complex and divided world \(rln.global\)](#) see also [Difference for Primary Schools - Difference: Make your faith count in a complex and divided world \(rln.global\)](#)

⁹⁰ Cooling, Trevor, Doing God in Education, Page 66, Theos, 2010



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

3.2 The Church-School relationship

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

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

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

For the times when a school may need to navigate different viewpoints (e.g. in a governing board meeting, for example), the Pastoral Principles developed as part of the *Living in Love and Faith* process provide a framework for good disagreement⁹¹:

acknowledge

PREJUDICE

cast out

FEAR

speak into

SILENCE

admit

HYPOCRISY

address

IGNORANCE

pay attention to

POWER

Whilst ultimately statutory guidance and the law must take precedence over the range of views that exist locally, school leaders will need to manage these situations carefully. They will need to ensure a balance between enabling all parties to be heard whilst protecting those in their school community for

⁹¹ Church of England, The Pastoral Principles, [Internet], Available at : [The Pastoral Principles | The Church of England](#)



whom listening to particular viewpoints on gender and sexuality can be painful. This includes ensuring that pupils and adults who hold a particular view, on the basis of their religious or non-religious worldview, understand that they are legally entitled to do so. In Church schools, the expectation would be that all views are expressed in line with the pastoral principles cited above. Where disagreements exist which require mediation or further support, a school should call upon the expertise within its Diocesan Board of Education.

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

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

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

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

Schools who work with para-church organisations or Christian charities offering curriculum support should apply the same principles. A clear policy and guidance on expectations of external speakers can be essential tools in navigating this well. Schools should discuss how this area will be addressed when entering into relationships with these organisations so that there is clarity on both sides right from the start.



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

3.3 The Role of Governors

All governors should understand their duties under the relevant legislation. Role descriptions and codes of conduct (often linked to the Seven Principles of Public Life⁹² and with reference to the Equality Act⁹³) are useful to have in place and to revisit in times of disagreement and tension⁹⁴. Some dioceses will have a governance support officer who can provide further assistance in navigating disagreements. Governors should exercise their role in terms of the public interest and should act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence available and without discrimination or bias.

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

School trusts should be monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of governance in this area to ensure that their schools are robustly held to account regarding their tackling of HBT bullying. 'Central to the flourishing of any school trust is its love for each individual school's local community; a love which...enable[es] adults and children to flourish together... challenging injustice and celebrating diversity.'⁹⁵ This should include a strong commitment to ensuring that each school is protecting the pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ and adults who are (or perceived to be) LGBT+ within their community so that they feel safe, experience belonging and are given every chance to succeed academically.

⁹² Gov.uk, The Seven Principles of Public Life, [Internet], Available at : [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-seven-principles-of-public-life)

⁹³ Gov.uk, Equality Act 2010 Guidance, 2010, [Internet] Available at : [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-guidance)

⁹⁴ National Governance Association, Role Descriptions, [Internet], Available at : [Role descriptions | National Governance Association \(nga.org.uk\)](https://nga.org.uk/role-descriptions) see also [Role description: Trustee \(cstuk.org.uk\)](https://cstuk.org.uk/role-description-trustee)

⁹⁵ Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing School System, p18 [Internet] 2023 Available at [our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](https://www.churchofengland.org/our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf)



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

3.4 Working with parents and carers

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

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

LGBT+ parents/ carers can bring useful insight to the development and revision of anti-bullying policies. It is also important to note that 1 in 5 adoptions are now by same-sex couples.⁹⁶ This has increased significantly since 2010 and therefore schools will find they have increasing numbers of LGBT+ parents/ carers. Schools should have regard to this when responding to the needs of care-experienced pupils as well as recognising the increasing presence of LGBT+ parents/ carers in school communities, since these pupils are already at increased risk of bullying.

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

⁹⁶ Gov.uk, Children look after in England 2023, 2023, [Children looked after in England including adoptions. Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions-reporting-year-2023)



3.5 Working with different faith communities

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

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

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

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

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

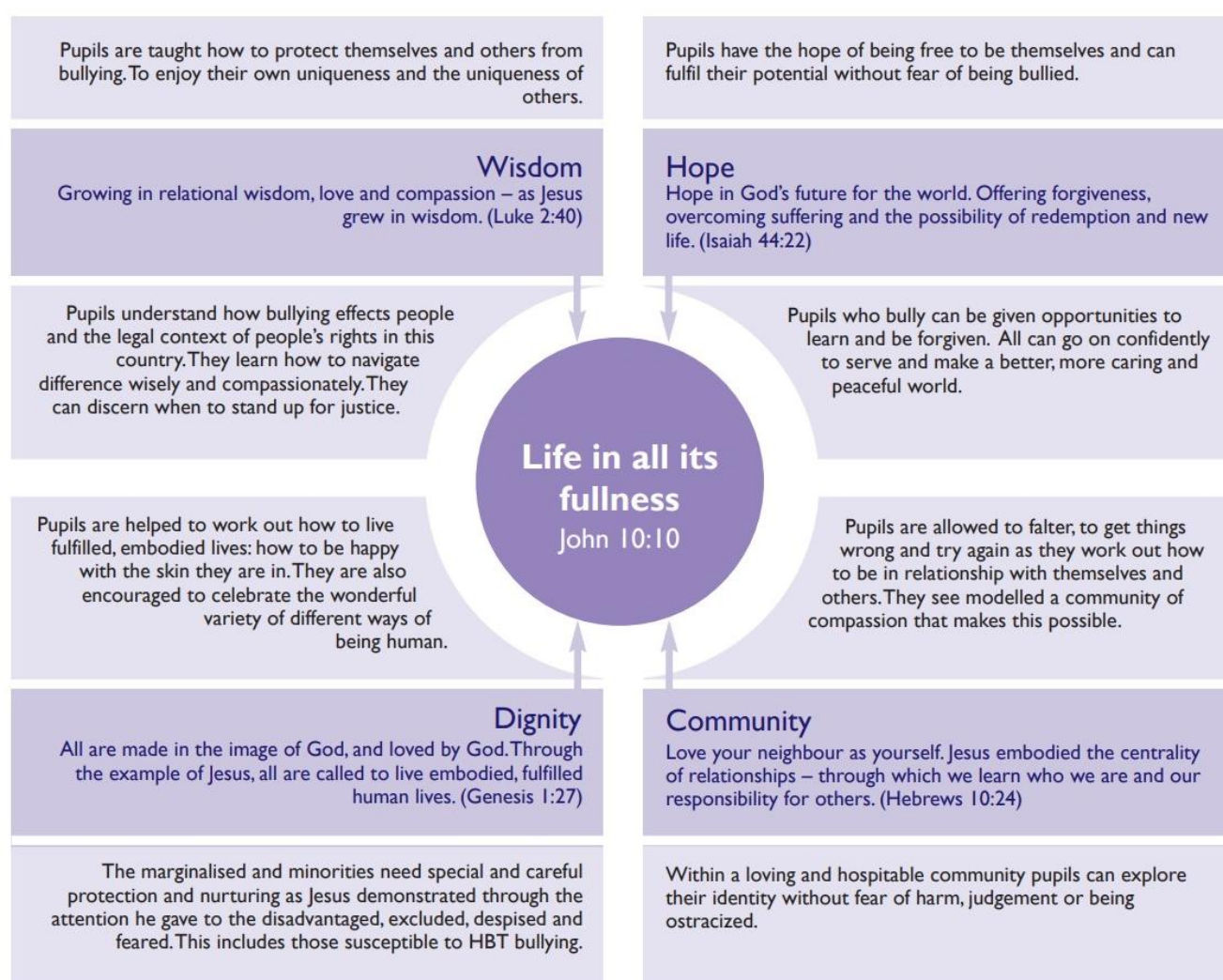
As with all pupils, schools must view and treat every pupil who is (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ as having inherent value and infinite worth. Just like every other pupil, they are made in the image of God. Just like every other pupil, they must be protected from harm – particularly in the form of bullying.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

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



‘Flourishing can only happen when each and every child is treated with dignity’⁹⁷ and this must include every pupil who is (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ along with the adults who teach, support and surround them. Church schools should be standard carriers for inclusive practice, championing the disadvantaged and marginalised and demonstrating the highest possible standards of safeguarding and care. The ‘life in all its fullness’ described in Part A of *Flourishing for All* requires that this same standard is applied to those who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ.

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



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

⁹⁷ Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing School System, p9 [Internet] 2023 Available at [our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf) ([churchofengland.org](https://www.churchofengland.org))



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

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

5.1 Preventing HBT Bullying

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

Human sexuality and gender identity are currently areas where there is no single opinion or understanding. Members of the school community might hold very different views and there may be tension on this subject in some schools, but this does not mean that matters and questions of sexuality, gender and gender identity should be passed over. Nor does it mean that it is acceptable for homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language or viewpoints to be shared within the school. Rather, schools should ensure they address these topics sensitively to create a culture of respect towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ. This has been proven to actively contribute towards the prevention of HBT bullying. No matter what the views of school community members, pupils must be protected and bullying must be challenged.⁹⁸

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

Such preventative strategies might include:

5.1.1 Policies and culture

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

⁹⁸ Anti Bullying Alliance, Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying , [Internet] Available at : [Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying \(anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk\)](https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)



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

5.1.2 Explicit pastoral support

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



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

5.2 Responding to HBT Bullying

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

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



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

5.2.1 Challenging

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



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

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

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

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

5.2.2 Supporting

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

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

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

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

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



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

5.2.3 Reporting

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

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

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

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

Bullying can be a significant issue for pupils in primary schools. Research has indicated that there is a decline in the risk of frequent bullying with age, with more children in primary school experiencing bullying than in secondary school.⁹⁹ Experiencing bullying at an early age affects a child’s long term perception of school leading to higher absence, poor wellbeing and low academic achievement.¹⁰⁰

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

⁹⁹ The Children’s Society, Good Childhood Report, 2022, [Internet], Available at : [GCR-2022-Full-Report.pdf \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/publications/good-childhood-report-2022)

¹⁰⁰ Anti Bullying Alliance, Bullying, school experiences and wellbeing: a picture of pupil experience of bullying, 2023, [Internet], Available at : [Bullying, school experiences and wellbeing: a picture of pupil experience of bullying 2023](https://www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Bullying-school-experiences-and-wellbeing-a-picture-of-pupil-experience-of-bullying-2023.pdf)



of childhood'.¹⁰¹ Childhood should be a time where it is accepted that development is still in progress. Williams comments that in our modern world 'children are pressed into adult or pseudo-adult roles as fast as possible'.¹⁰² This need to protect childhood from early sexualisation and consumerism has been taken up by the Mothers' Union in their Bye Buy Childhood campaign.¹⁰³ It is also a theme in the Bishop of Gloucester's Liedentity campaign which seeks to protect young people from the damaging influence of social media and promote the message that who you are is more than how you look.¹⁰⁴

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

It is not appropriate that a primary school's strategy for combatting bullying towards LGB/GQ pupils or LGBT+ adults should focus on any aspect of differing sexual practices (i.e. what people do with their bodies sexually, although human reproduction may be an element of the science curriculum). An exploration of differing sexual activity would go against a primary school's responsibility to safeguard the latency of childhood. This is reflected in the government's draft RSHE statutory guidance.¹⁰⁵

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

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

¹⁰¹ Williams, Rowan, Lost Icons, Page 9, Morehouse, 2002

¹⁰² Williams, Rowan, Lost Icons, Page 11, Morehouse, 2002

¹⁰³ Mothers' Union, Bye Buy Childhood | A Mothers' Union campaign on the commercialisation of childhood, [Internet]. Available at : [Bye Buy Childhood | A Mothers' Union campaign on the commercialisation of childhood \(muenterprises.org\)](https://www.muenterprises.org/bye-buy-childhood)

¹⁰⁴ Diocese of Gloucester, Liedentity, [Internet], Available at: <http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/parish-resources/communications/liedentity/>

¹⁰⁵ Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance, 2024, [Internet] Available at : [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115236/Relationships_Education_Guidance.pdf)



	• All stakeholders, including governors, receiving regular training on identifying, understanding, and addressing HBT bullying. They should also have an in-depth understanding of the Equality Act and the PSED and how they apply within an educational context. • Explicitly encouraging inclusion and professional conduct amongst staff, including the requirement to treat one another with dignity and respect. This can be done in the staff handbook and during inductions and should include a mechanism for staff to report peer-to-peer bullying anonymously. • Understanding that parents/ carers are key partners in tackling any harassment towards LGB/GQ pupils or LGBT+ adults such as derogatory comments, taunting or name-calling and behaviours aimed at humiliating others.
Curriculum	• Primary-aged pupils should have the opportunity to learn that families sometimes look different to their own, and that these differences should be respected. This may include families with LGBT+ parents/ carers as well as single parents/ carers, foster parents, grandparents and a range of different family make-ups. This is important for all pupils as they navigate life in modern Britain. • Learning that healthy friendships are ones which are positive and welcoming towards others, and ensure others are not excluded. This should be explored through the PSHE curriculum, and through the books pupils read. • Knowing the importance of respecting others, including those who are very different from them or have different preferences or beliefs. This should be explored through the RE curriculum and through strategies such as the Difference course. • Ensuring the statutory guidance for Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education is implemented. This would usually include ‘teaching awareness and respect towards LGBT people.’¹⁰⁶ It should not include an exploration of differing sexual activity (see 6.1) above. • If a school cannot show that they have properly consulted their community about its teaching about LGBT+ people, this will be taken into account by Ofsted inspectors when making the leadership and management judgement.

6.2 Specific guidance for Church of England secondary schools

Adolescence is a transitional stage of life marked by questions of identity and belonging. This developmental phase often involves heightened body consciousness and the effects of puberty hormones, leading to internal conflicts in the search for confidence¹⁰⁷. Additionally, adolescence is a stage in which young people navigate social dynamics and peer relationships, which can significantly

¹⁰⁶ Ofsted, Inspecting Teaching of the Protected Characteristics, August 2023 [Internet] Available at [Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91444/Inspecting-teaching-of-the-protected-characteristics-in-schools-2023.pdf)

¹⁰⁷ Johnson, R. Puberty and Its Impact on Adolescent Development, 2019, Academic Press.



influence their self-perception and emotional wellbeing¹⁰⁸. During this period, young people seek to understand who they are and who they will become as adults¹⁰⁹. An inclusive support system, comprising of but not limited to family, school, and community, plays a crucial role in helping adolescents manage these challenges and develop a healthy sense of self.¹¹⁰

Bullying towards pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ, or towards LGBT+ adults, as well as the inappropriate and derogatory use of the term 'lesbian' or 'gay' remain a significant issue at secondary level. Clear policies, strong messages, anti-bullying work and the consistent challenging of HBT bullying and language are vital tools in ensuring Church of England secondary schools are places of welcome where all can achieve their best in an emotionally safe environment and can grow to have 'life in all its fullness'.¹¹¹

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

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

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

¹⁰⁸ Brown, B. B., & Larson, R. W. *The Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, 2018, Wiley.

¹⁰⁹ Smith, A., *Identity Formation in Adolescence*, 2020, Routledge.

¹¹⁰ Garcia, M., *Supporting Adolescents Through Their Development*, 2021, HarperCollins.

¹¹¹ John 10:10



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



	may include members of the school's wider community, who are welcomed into school to speak about their life and work. • Learning about legally protected characteristics including sexual orientation and gender reassignment. This teaching and learning is most likely to occur in the PSHE curriculum in line with government guidelines. • Learning about LGBT+ families and relationships through RHSE. 'LGBT-relevant knowledge and examples are included throughout programmes of study (not one-off teaching)'¹¹² • Learning how to navigate and hold difference well, including different religious and non-religious beliefs relating to human sexuality and gender. These must be carefully planned and would usually be taught through the RE curriculum.
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6.3 Guidance for Diocesan Boards of Education

If HBT bullying is going to be eliminated from Church of England schools, then those who have responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of Church schools must take an active role in encouraging their schools to implement measures to tackle it. With the many responsibilities and agendas school leaders have to hold and navigate, tackling HBT bullying is not always prioritised. Diocesan Boards of Education (DBEs) need to take a lead in ensuring their schools have strategies in place to prevent and respond to incidents of HBT bullying. As part of their role, DBEs may 'give advice on matters affecting Church schools in the diocese to: the governing bodies or proprietors of those schools, the trustees of church educational endowments, and such other persons concerned with education in the diocese as the DBE considers appropriate.'¹¹³ That should include advice on implementing the recommendations of this suite of resources. For example, a diocese may require new governors to indicate their commitment to ensuring schools are actively tackling HBT bullying in all its forms.

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

¹¹² Gov.uk, Training Module: Teaching About Families, May 2023 [Internet] Available at [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6454dec8c33b4600cf5e723/RSHE_Families.pptx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK_RSHE_Families.pptx_\(live.com\)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6454dec8c33b4600cf5e723/RSHE_Families.pptx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK_RSHE_Families.pptx_(live.com))

¹¹³ Legislation.gov.uk, Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/2021/1/enacted>



‘A flourishing diocese lives out its generous vision for education with dignity, ensuring that every child from every background has access to the highest quality of education, through which their flourishing is released.’¹¹⁴

Specific recommendations for Diocesan Boards for Education:

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

6.4 Commitments from the NSE

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

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

September 2024

¹¹⁴ Church of England Education Office, Our Hope for a Flourishing School System, p21 [Internet] 2023 Available at [our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf) ([churchofengland.org](https://www.churchofengland.org))



Part C: Guidance for Preventing and Tackling Race-based Bullying

Part C of *Flourishing for All – Anti-bullying Guidance for Church of England Schools* focuses specifically on supporting schools with preventing and addressing bullying towards pupils and adults because of their race and/or ethnic identity. This document calls for Church schools to do all they can to be places where living well together is the normative culture. Race-based bullying prevents this from occurring.

As guidance for schools in England, this document is based in English law as well as a Christian vision for reconciliation and justice. For the purposes of this document, the definition of race ascribed by the Equality Act 2010 is utilised as it has determined the language used by the Department for Education and other government bodies. Reference will be made to the various ways race-based bullying can manifest when focused on race, ethnicity or nationality. The Equality Act¹¹⁵ recognises that each of these terms has been historically used to varied extents with different UK Minoritised Ethnic /Global Majority Heritage (UKME/GMH) racialised groups.

Race-based bullying is defined as “*harassment or unwanted behaviour connected to someone’s race, ethnicity or cultural background which has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment*”¹¹⁶

As with bullying in general, race-based bullying can occur in various forms, including directly through physical violence or indirectly through continuous hateful remarks around a person’s racial group. Whether intentional or not, when actions are undertaken to cause continual offence, exclusion, harassment or harm, schools are required to protect adults and pupils within their care.

Race-based bullying can overlap with some forms of faith-based bullying. This may have implications for those who are practising their religion, its traditions and obligations within schools, e.g. Antisemitism, Sikhophobia, Islamophobia or those with no religion.¹¹⁷ Ethno-religious groups define themselves by ethnic identity and religious belief. They have shared ancestral history and cultural traditions rooted in their religious belief. The crossover between the two may lead to persecution on both grounds.¹¹⁸ Antisemitism in schools mirrors wider societal prejudices and can increase significantly during periods of heightened conflict. The use of stereotypes and historic caricatures of the Jewish faith and its people aim to create a dehumanising effect for the victim. Such racialised behaviour can create a school environment where those exposed to antisemitism do not feel safe. Approximately 23% of British Jewish parents reported that their child encountered antisemitism at school, in the vicinity of school or while travelling to or from school.¹¹⁹

Those who face Islamophobia and race-based bullying within schools also have high levels of stereotyping ascribed to them.¹²⁰ Muslim pupils, or those perceived to be Muslim, have reported being targeted for their skin colour, name or wearing of specific clothing. The victims of Islamophobic race-based bullying face verbal abuse, physical aggression and social exclusion. The Anti-Bullying Alliance¹²¹ highlights the idea that events such as riots with racist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic undertones can exacerbate these issues in schools. Such

¹¹⁵ Department for Education, [Equality Act 2010: Guidance](#), last updated 16 June 2015

¹¹⁶ Section 26 of the [Equality Act 2010](#)

¹¹⁷ Department for Education, [Bullying: Evidence from LSYPE2, wave 3, Research Brief](#), June 2018

¹¹⁸ Institute for Curriculum Services, [Are Jews A Religious Group or an Ethnic Group?](#)

¹¹⁹ Dr Carli Lessof, [Antisemitism in schools: How prevalent is it, and how might it affect parents' decisions about where to educate their children post-October 7](#), 2024.

¹²⁰ Community Policy Forum, [Written Evidence to the Education Select Committee](#), May 2023

¹²¹ Anti-Bullying Alliance, [Prevalence of Bullying](#)



incidents are sometimes based on negative stereotypes that portray Muslims as violent or oppressive. This raises concerns among pupils, staff, and parents, potentially leading to increased racist bullying within schools.

While the intersection of faith and race are discussed in brief, this section of the antibullying guidance will primarily focus on race. A subsequent section, Part E of *Flourishing for All – Antibullying guidance for Church of England Schools*, will focus directly on faith- based bullying.

Part C Executive Summary

- Pupils and adults of every ethnicity, nationality and culture have innate worth as made in the image of God and must therefore be treated with the same dignity and respect as their peers.
- **Difference should be embraced, not erased.** It is crucial for Church schools to embrace and celebrate differences, as failing to recognise diversity (colour-blindness) can cause harm.
- Pupils and adults from particular ethnic groups are at a higher risk of being bullied at their schools. Bullying on the basis of skin colour remains prevalent within society and this includes schools.
- Race-based bullying also includes pupils and adults from particular faith or cultural backgrounds, for example bullying of GRT pupils and adults as well as Islamophobic and antisemitic bullying.
- Race-based bullying can take a number of forms, including persistent microaggressions which cause ongoing harm to UKME/GMH people. This can include UKME/GMH school staff, who are much less likely than their peers to progress into leadership.
- When race overlaps with other characteristics (e.g. their gender, religion or poverty), a pupil or adult can become even more vulnerable to bullying and may need special attention to ensure their safety.
- Sometimes pupils and adults can experience bullying between or within cultural groups; it is therefore essential for Church schools to be attuned to their local context and communities to understand possible areas of conflict.
- Churches governors, parents/ carers and faith communities have an important role to play in working with the school and local communities to understand contextual issues, report specific race-based incidents and to work together to bring about reconciliation.
- A Church school's approach to preventing and tackling race-based bullying should emanate from its Christian vision, ensuring 'life in all its fullness' for all.
- Church schools should ensure their school culture sends a clear message of welcome and inclusion to pupils and adults from all different ethnicities, nationalities and cultures, together with explicit communication about the unacceptability of race-based bullying.
- Proactive teaching about difference is needed to ensure a Church school's culture actively prevents race-based bullying.
- Policies in place within a Church school should ensure the physical, emotional and psychological safety of all its pupils and adults.
- Church schools must deal decisively with any race-based bullying incidents, utilising the challenge, report, support framework.
- Diocesan boards of education have an important role to play in supporting and advising their Church schools to navigate any challenges they face in dealing with race-based bullying.



Note: In this document we use the term United Kingdom Minoritised Ethnic/Global Majority Heritage (UKME/GMH) which is recognised as a broad and relatively up to date way to reference those who are not racialised as White British. This captures that the reference is specific to the UK and that ethnic groups have had the “minority” label ascribed to them. This umbrella term, as with all aggregated terms (BAME, BME, GMH etc.) generalises the characteristics and issues facing multiple identities. There are known limitations in some of the racialised terminology used within this document. For example, it is recognised that racialised groups are very diverse within themselves and their lived experience. Schools should consider the self-identification of the individual when dealing with incidents or issues, and the broader impact for diverse racial and ethnic groups when examining the wider possible patterns.

Within this document, whenever required, specific racial groups are referred to. Again, there are ethnic variations within the broader racial groups which schools must consider in order to tailor a structured antibullying process that is effective at supporting a truly antiracist culture.

In the Equality Act, Section 9, race refers to colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins. As such, in defining the protected characteristic, a racial group can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups such as Irish Travellers, Black British.

In sociological terms¹²²,

- Race is a historic, social construct used to categorise people on perceived physical differences.
- Ethnicity refers to identity and heritage based in shared cultural, historic and geographical traditions.
- Nationality is the status of belonging to a nation state and identity.

1. Why is it important for Church schools to address race-based bullying?

At the heart of every Church school should be flourishing children, free from harm and ‘empowered to see the future through eyes of hope’.¹²³ Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) emphasises the importance of having appropriate policies and procedures in place to safeguard and promote children’s welfare, including measures to prevent bullying. We recognise that bullying can significantly impact on wellbeing and development. Beyond immediate emotional distress, bullying can lead to long term psychological effects hindering academic performance and social integration.¹²⁴

Part A of Flourishing for All emphasises that an antibullying approach, rooted in the Church of England’s *Vision for Education*¹²⁵, must include dignity, community, hope and wisdom.¹²⁶ A deeply Christian vision begins with the belief that all individuals are made in the image of God and therefore schools need to design and maintain safe,

¹²² Institute for Fiscal Studies, [Race and Ethnicity](#)
University of Bristol, [Inclusive Writing: Ethnicity and Race](#)
Advance HE, [Use of Language: Race and Ethnicity](#)

¹²³ Church of England Foundational for Educational Leadership, [Our Hope for a Flourishing School System](#), page 9

¹²⁴ Frances Akinde, Be an Ally, not a Bystander, 2023

¹²⁵ Church of England, [Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good](#), 2016

¹²⁶ Church of England, [Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good](#), 2016



welcoming environments where diversity is celebrated, and all pupils can thrive. This in turn has a significant impact on academic and vocational achievement, as well as the wider flourishing of each person.¹²⁷

Theological reflection

Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV):

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

In this passage, Christians are reminded that all people—regardless of their ethnicity, race, or gender—are made in the image of God. This is not a privilege given to some and denied to others, but rather the belief that every individual, regardless of their skin colour or background, has inherent dignity and worth in God’s eyes.

This belief is revolutionary because it challenges the divisions and prejudices that exist in our world. If all people are made in God’s image, then all humans are equal in His sight. There is no room for discrimination or exclusion. Therefore, for Christians, each person they encounter—whether in school, at work, or in our communities—reflects the image of God and, therefore, deserves to be treated with respect, kindness, and love.

In our world today, racial injustice and inequality are still pervasive. We see systemic racism in many areas of life, from education and employment to healthcare and the justice system. Many individuals and communities continue to face prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion based on their race or ethnicity. These realities for Christians stand in stark contrast to scripture—that every person is made in the image of God and, therefore, deserves equal treatment and respect. This document calls on those leading Church schools to reflect on how they can stand against racism and prejudice, whether in their own hearts, in their schools, or in society at large, embracing the belief of Imago Dei, to work on building communities that reflect God’s justice, love, and equality.

The Church of England’s report ‘From Lament to Action’¹²⁸ addresses the issue of racism within the church, acknowledging its historical and present-day impact. It examines how racism has been embedded in the Church of England’s structures, practices, and attitudes, and outlines steps to move from mere acknowledgment (lament) of this racism to tangible actions aimed at reform and healing. It acknowledges that the church’s colonial history has shaped its interactions with people of different races, and this legacy continues to affect its work today. It notes that cultural change is not just about dealing with individual prejudice but is also about scrutinising the structures and practices of the organisation, including a lack of diversity among its ranks. It also recognises that people may feel they do not belong or that their voices are not heard, contributing to a sense of

¹²⁷ Education Policy Institute, [Bullying: A review of the Evidence](#), 2018

¹²⁸ Church of England, [From Lament to Action, The Report of the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce](#), 2021



alienation. The report calls for deep institutional changes, including better representation, more inclusive practices, and a commitment to addressing racial injustice both within the church and in wider society. This document specifically seeks similar development within Church of England schools.

Our Hope for a Flourishing School system¹²⁹ also addresses the issue of racism, recognising that it is an obstacle to the flourishing of pupils and communities:

“A vision for education centred on dignity and respect enables flourishing children to learn from and grow alongside others who are different from themselves. “

This calls for Church of England schools to be places where diversity is celebrated, racism is not tolerated, and communities learn to live well together. Church schools are tasked with creating environments where pupils learn to understand and appreciate different cultures, where racial prejudice is actively challenged, and where pupils are taught to live out values of respect, kindness, and justice. Schools, in their policies, curricula and practice, are urged to undertake concrete actions that will reflect the diversity of the world, teaching pupils about racism, its history, and the importance of standing up against injustice as part of their ongoing commitment. This is seen as essential to fostering a culture of respect and preventing the perpetuation of racial stereotypes.

There is an urgency to this. Recent wider resurgence of racism, ethnic nationalism, antisemitism, Islamophobia and xenophobia worldwide has also resulted in a surge in UK society where 7 in 10 of hate crimes are racially motivated¹³⁰. Schools are not immune to this impact. In 2021, *The Guardian* revealed that there were more than 60,000 racist incidents in British schools between 2016 and 2021.¹³¹ Since 2020 the number of school suspensions and exclusions reflect significant increases in the number of cases of racist abuse.¹³² Across 2021 to 2023, suspensions for racist incidents increased from 9452 to 11,619 while permanent exclusions that included racist abuse as one of the reasons increased from 53 to 66.¹³³ Schools are called upon to change this trend of increasing incidents by encouraging and facilitating healthy dialogue around diversity. The Church of England Vision for Education¹³⁴ states that education is not only for community and living well together but also needs to maintain the principles of dignity and respect for all of God’s people.

Church schools, in particular, are called to demonstrate that **‘In Christ, our differences are not simply erased but rather embraced, valuing the unique ways we each reflect the image of God.’**¹³⁵ Church schools’ place as social hubs are one of their most important remits. Their social responsibilities begin from the simple recognition of varying levels of racial diversity within the school and local community and extend into the call to live harmoniously in a truly inclusive and welcoming environment. To create a safe social space, Church schools need to be proactively open around race-based antibullying practice thereby creating an environment of trust.

To trust the environment they are within, children and adults need to feel safe, noticed and supported. It is essential that all schools strive to ensure that all members of its community can experience *life in all its fullness*.¹⁰ This includes children and adults from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. When we examine the work

¹²⁹ Church of England Foundational for Educational Leadership, [Our Hope for a Flourishing School System](#), page 9

¹³⁰ Home Office, [Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition](#), last updated November 2023

¹³¹ Batty, D. & Parveen, N. 2021 UK schools record more than 60,000 racist incidents in five years. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/28/uk-schools-record-more-than-60000-racist-incidents-five-years>

¹³² Department for Education, [Suspensions and exclusions in England](#), last updated January 2025
TES Magazine, [The shocking rise of racism in primary schools](#), January 2025

¹³³ Gov.uk Suspensions. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/>

¹³⁴ Church of England, [Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good](#), 2016

¹³⁵ Church of England, [From Lament to Action. The Report of the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce](#), 2021, page 8



of Jesus in the Gospels, he not only healed those who experienced the effects of injustice but also confronted those who were causing it. In the same way Church schools are called to ensure both victim and perpetrator are provided with the support and/or challenge to contribute meaningfully to the school community. We should view justice as an expression of God's love and desire for all to learn to live together well.

Where the fear of race-based bullying exists and is not addressed, children and adults cannot feel safe. Where cultural differences are ignored and diminished, a person cannot feel acknowledged. When a person faces continual microaggressions that shames them into not feeling confident enough to be their authentic, professional self at school, a person cannot feel supported. Race-based bullying breaks relationships and social contracts within the school community. Church schools are expected to build, heal and maintain positive relationships such that current and future generations value difference across all people.¹³⁶

Reconciliation in the context of Church schools, especially following instances of racism, involves a process of acknowledgment, healing, repair and restoration of relationships. This process is informed by Christian principles of forgiveness, justice, and restoration. It aims to address both the personal harm caused by racism, the structural injustices that allow racism to persist and the systemic discrimination that pervades various aspects of society.

2. What does the experience of race-based bullying look like?

Race based bullying occurs when individuals or groups are targeted and harassed because of their race or ethnic background. It persists when there is a lack of awareness, ineffective policies, normalisation of discrimination and inadequate support. When bias and stigma are allowed to thrive, it perpetuates and normalises marginalisation and discrimination. Some societal behaviours and attitudes, when normalised in schools, allow negative stereotypes around racial groups to remain unchallenged and can lead to discrimination, harassment or bullying. This leads to harmful and toxic environments that stifle growth, inclusion and wellbeing. It is important to keep clear records that can discern when discrimination has escalated to bullying.

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

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
- often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation'¹³⁷

In determining whether bullying, rather than discrimination, has taken place, the three parameters must be met. Where discrimination occurs, schools should employ their *Behaviour, Safeguarding* or relevant *Equalities* Policy that outlines the school's response to racism.

2.1 What does race-based bullying look like?

2.1.1 Overt race-based bullying

Race-based bullying occurs where repetitive actions directed towards the victim seek to cause hurt and offence. Name calling and the use of slurs and derogatory terms for various ethnic groups are the most common form of

¹³⁶ Church of England, [Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good](#), 2016, page 12

¹³⁷ Gov.uk, [Bullying - A Definition](#)



overt discriminatory behaviour associated with race-based bullying. It seeks to demean the existence of others through humiliation.

Another form of overt race-based bullying is continual microaggression. Microaggressions are “the everyday slights, indignities, put-downs and insults that members of marginalized groups experience in their day-to-day interactions with individuals who are often unaware they have engaged in an offensive or demeaning way”.¹³⁸

These behaviours are more common yet less likely to be dealt with despite the serious impact they have on the victim over time. Impact rather than intent is the key consideration when examining microaggressions. They can present as:

- consistently treating children differently based on assumptions and beliefs
- making fun of someone’s accent or foods they eat
- making fun of someone’s customs or traditions
- excluding someone because of their race
- racist jokes or statements around body image and other personal traits
- making assumptions of abilities - academic, sporting, language- based on a person’s skin colour

Overt race-based bullying can increasingly occur online in the form of posting videos, sending threatening messages or posting racist symbols.

2.1.2 Escalation to Hate Speech and Hate Crimes

It should be noted, that in some instances, when the language used seeks to intentionally incite hatred through the context in which it occurred, the influence of the speaker, the reach to the public and the likelihood of harm or violence it can cause, it is considered to be hate speech.¹³⁹

Where hate speech is suspected to have occurred and may lead to a criminal offence taking place, schools should also be aware that this could also constitute a hate crime which must be reported to the police.¹⁴⁰

The Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) 1998 and Sentencing Act 2020 (SA 2020) are the foundations by which the Crown Prosecution Service defines hate crime as “*Any incident/crime which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person’s race or religion or perceived race or religion*”¹⁴¹

2.1.3 Covert discriminatory practices

Covert discriminatory practices may occur when specific racial groups of pupils are disproportionately affected by enforcement of school policy and disciplinary actions, continual omission or use of only degrading representation of their race within the school curricula, and negative stereotypes around their cultural norms that can impact their self-esteem and engagement with school. This in turn affects their academic achievement.

¹³⁸ Bristol University, [Microaggressions: A Guide](#)

¹³⁹ United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), [The Rabat plan of Action](#)

¹⁴⁰ Police UK, [What is hate crime?](#)

¹⁴¹ Crown Prosecution Service [Public statement on prosecuting racist and religious hate crime](#), March 2022



Such practice has been seen historically.¹⁴² In the 1970s, some schools openly racially profiled and discriminated against pupils from minority racialised backgrounds in order to place them into Schools for the Educationally Subnormal. Biased IQ and academic testing, speaking English with an accent, and the very low expectations within ESN schools limited access to education and future goals for a generation of children from UKME background, particularly those in the Black community. The schools had leant into learned, societal stereotypes which labelled some racial groups as “disruptive and aggressive”, others “model minorities” and others “quiet and oppressed”. Such historic education experiences created a long-lasting legacy of mistrust around education that some schools have worked consistently to reverse.

2.2 Bullying on the basis of skin colour

Racial bullying based on skin colour is rooted in racial prejudices and stereotypes that link skin colour to ability, behaviour and worth. Where there is a visible a, pupils and adults from UKME/GMH backgrounds may experience verbal abuse, exclusion from participation and stereotyping. Within some ethnic groups, discriminatory practice around skin tone, referred to as *colourism*¹⁴³, may lead to harassment and bullying (ie treating those with darker skin tones differently from those with lighter skin). Such bullying can have lasting impact on body image, self-confidence and ideas of beauty.

Schools should be mindful that forms of displayed bullying on the basis of skin colour can occur for all skin tones. Continual derogatory reference, targeted social exclusion or physical harm on the basis of skin colour can build from discrimination to bullying.

2.3 Bullying on the basis of ethnicity (including bullying towards GRT pupils and adults)

Ethnicity, including cultural background, is often associated with “otherness” and unequal expectations and treatment. Bullying that stems from the ignorance, prejudice or stereotypes around different ethnic groups can have severe emotional and psychological effects on pupils and adults. Their alienation from peers and the wider school community detracts from the development of a safe, welcoming environment where pupils and adults can feel true belonging. This is particularly significant for some ethnic groups that are racialised as White via skin colour but considered UKME by ethnicity e.g. those under the umbrella terms Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT+) or White Eastern European. Specific racial groups, such as those of Gypsy, Roma & Traveller heritages are consistently subject to high levels of discrimination and active marginalisation. Perceptions around the group are regularly discriminatory stereotypes which diminish the value of their beliefs, culture and practices. Mocking of cultural practices, bullying over appearance, being perceived as “uneducated or delinquent” by teachers or peers all contribute to race-based bullying.¹⁴⁴ Sometimes, school policies and practices may unintentionally fail to recognise the importance of maintaining or valuing the traditions of GRT+ communities, leading to disproportionate disciplinary action or academic stereotyping. Within the pupil population, continued negative interactions can escalate into both verbal and physical bullying and harassment. Repetition of such interactions

¹⁴² Bernard Coard, *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System: The Scandal of the Black Child in Schools in Britain*, 1971

¹⁴³ Craddock, N. et al. ‘Understanding colourism in the UK: development and assessment of the everyday colourism scale’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 46(10), pp. 2242–2277, 2022

Phoenix, A. and Craddock, N. ‘Dark skin penalty, shame and resistance: negotiating colourism in UK families’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 48(1), pp. 4–25, 2024

¹⁴⁴ Anti Bullying Alliance, [Bullied. Not believed and Blamed](#), 2020



over a prolonged historic period has built some distrust of schools and the education system, especially where increased cultural awareness and action towards the GRT+ heritages has not been prioritised.

2.4 Bullying on the basis of nationality, national origin and immigration status

Many Church schools intentionally build welcoming cultures where pupils and adults of various nationalities or national origins feel that their presence is valued. This is vital for those pupils (and adults) who may face racism and discrimination dependent on their country of origin, immigration status and means by which they may have arrived in the UK.¹⁴⁵ Trauma can be further exacerbated when pupils are aware of or have witnessed racialised bullying behaviour around immigration status.¹⁴⁶ Where nationality status is uncertain, e.g. asylum seeker/ refugee, research shows that there is a significantly higher chance of bullying.¹⁴⁷

Being viewed through the political or cultural lens of their country of origin may lead to negative assumptions and stereotypes around language, food, clothing or behaviour. There may be instances where the inability to provide sufficient acknowledgement and, where needed, support for trauma-experienced before coming to the UK may lead to negative pupil behaviours. Teachers and staff might interpret behaviour such as anxiety, withdrawal, or aggression—common responses to trauma—as disruptive or disrespectful which leads to marginalisation from education.¹⁴⁸ Discriminatory or insensitive remarks from peers and, even from adults may leave pupils feeling belittled or isolated. This isolation can contribute to feelings of alienation and emotional distress.

Where schools are not resourced with staff who can offer sufficient emotional or language support for those who require it, pupils may struggle to recognise or report bullying.

2.5 Peer or intra-racial bullying

Race-based bullying does not only occur across racial groups. ‘Intra-cultural pressure and conflict’ may also feed bullying behaviour.¹⁴⁹

Peer victimisation occurs where:

- an individual may not conform to the racial stereotypes of their group
- an individual is of heritages across racial groups and is targeted for not belonging to a single group
- a pupil who is bilingual may be placed at higher risk of bullying for use of their second language
- a pupil who is bullied for their immigration status within a racialised group
- an individual from each of the UKME/GMH groups may bully another UKME/GMH group

¹⁴⁵ UK Trauma Council, [A Review of the Evidence: Understanding Educational Experiences of Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children](#)

¹⁴⁶ UNICEF, [Education for refugee and asylum seeking children: Access and quality in England, Scotland and Wales](#)

¹⁴⁷ Anti-Bullying Alliance, [Racist and faith targeted bullying – a review of the current literature](#), 2020

¹⁴⁸ Children and Young People’s Mental Health Coalition, [Behaviour and Mental Health in Schools](#), 2023

¹⁴⁹ Xu, Mariah et al. “Racial and Ethnic Differences in Bullying: Review and Implications for Intervention.” *Aggression and violent behavior* vol. 50, 2020



In these cases, an individual may feel great pressure to conform to behaviours, friendship groups or activities that they are not comfortable with.

2.6 Race-based bullying towards adults

Adults within schools may also face race-based bullying.

Pupils can bully staff on a racialised basis by continual name-calling, continual pointing out of difference such as accent or dress, use of derogatory language and questioning of skill level to undermine and diminish the member of staff's authority. Whether pupils are acting out of ignorance or with intentional or unintentional malice the impact is significantly detrimental to the personal and professional standing of the member of staff.

Bullying by staff colleagues may also occur within schools. This should be managed fully in accordance with the school's anti-discrimination policy and the Staff conduct, Grievance and Whistleblowing Policies. Race-based discrimination or harassment can manifest in targeted actions such as continual unfounded complaints around performance or blocking from training, promotion and other opportunities afforded to peers. The most common form of race-based bullying between adults comes from microaggressions, subtle verbal and non-verbal behaviours, whether intentional or unintentional, that affect members of marginalised groups. In some cases, adults who experience race-based bullying at school are not provided with sufficient support and are expected to self-manage the impact felt.

Data shows that UKME/GMH staff are significantly less likely than their peers to progress into leadership roles within their schools.¹⁵⁰ Sometimes, the reason for this is discrimination they have experienced in their schools. Through the Leaders Like Us programme¹⁵¹, the National Society is seeking to address the challenge of under-representation in school leadership. More, however needs to be done across the education sector to challenge discrimination towards UKME/GMH teachers.

2.7 Use of language

Racialised language in bullying refers to the use of derogatory, discriminatory, or offensive language that targets someone's race or ethnicity. It involves using harmful stereotypes or prejudices that dehumanise or belittle individuals based on their racial or ethnic background. This type of bullying can manifest in various forms.

The use of explicit racial slurs - words or phrases directed at someone's racial identity - is one of the most recognised means of abuse. Subtler use of language, such as mocking accents, cultural practices or other behaviours that make others feel inferior, can also cause significant emotional, psychological, and social consequences. Shame, anger and anxiety which can lead to a loss of confidence and sense of inferiority, is the purpose of such forms of bullying. Schools are generally clear that verbal bullying is unacceptable, but may need to go further for pupils to recognise and report the subtler forms.

¹⁵⁰ NFER, [Racial Equality in the Teacher Workforce](#), 2022

¹⁵¹ [Leaders Like Us — National Society for Education](#)



2.8 Online/cyber race-based bullying

The increasing use of online platforms and digital communication provides a significant challenge to antibullying practice. The potential for prolonged, continual verbal and emotional abuse is high. The continual access to the victim can create fatigue and hopelessness. Most of the ways race-based bullying manifests in person can also be done through online means. Additionally, the isolation and exclusion of individuals from group activities and online conversations can also manifest as social exclusion. When a person becomes aware that they are being excluded because of their race, it may lead to social withdrawal from interactions online and in person.

Cyberbullying can also take the form of posting content about someone, without their permission and using technology to create fake content to harass or harm with the aim of humiliation. This can be for elements of their culture, such as accent, language, clothing, music, traditions or religious practices, depicted in a mocking or trivialising manner. This can have severe implications such as damage to reputation and impact on their digital footprint.

Due regard should be paid to the Online Safety Act (2024)¹⁵² for advice on those online areas are offences. This will include actions that encourage self-harm.

2.9 Physical in-person bullying

Physical bullying refers to instances where an individual is subjected to violence or harm against their body or possessions because of their race and/or ethnic group. This can include hitting, kicking, pushing, the removal or vandalism of personal possessions such as religious symbols (e.g. a cross, head scarf or turban). It seeks to intimidate, harm and dominate over a targeted individual and is often motivated by a belief that the victim's race is inferior or dangerous towards the dominant group. It aims to create fear or distress thereby not only inflicting physical harm and intimidation but also causing emotional harm leading to long term psychological consequences.

Schools should utilise their contextual understanding of their local community, constituent families and school population in order to assess the probability of racialised intimidation or physical attacks that may occur.¹⁵³ If the school does not have much knowledge of this it should seek to improve this. Building relationships with wider community members and having sound knowledge of the local context with regards to discourse on race, allows for proactive measures to safeguard pupils or counteract action that may cause harm. This is especially essential where there is a possibility of group aggression targeted to an individual based on their racial or ethnic identity. This may be a part of coordinated attacks or social exclusion accompanied by physical intimidation.

¹⁵²Department for Science, Innovation & Technology, [Online Safety Act – illegal content codes of practice 2024: explanatory memorandum](#), 2024

and Department for Science, Innovation & Technology, [Online Safety Act: explainer](#), 2024

¹⁵³ NSPCC, [Contextual safeguarding: what is it and why does it matter?](#), last updated October 2019



3. What are the particular challenges of addressing race-based bullying in Church of England schools?

The Church of England has been clear in its assessment of racism:

*Racism is a sin. Of this, we have no doubt. Anything which diminishes the value and beauty of each individual person, made in the image of God, is sinful.*¹⁵⁴

This echoes the underpinning of the approach taken by the Vision for Education¹⁵⁵ and Our Hope for a Flourishing School system.¹⁵⁶ Racism reduces the perceived value of a person within the community of God's family. It not only hurts the victim but, by maintaining such hatred and behaviours, hurts the perpetrator and by allowing such behaviour without intervening, diminishes the bystander.

From Lament to Action¹⁵⁷ sets out the key issues embedded into the structures of the church and seeks tangible means by which a change of culture can occur. Although the church generally has been slow to prioritise change in this area, education remains the best possible means for enabling change amongst children and young people. Church schools have increasingly taken responsibility for ensuring their provision meets the needs of all pupils and their actions bring equality into wider society.

3.1 Learning to live with racial difference

Proactive antiracism within schools purposefully addresses ignorance. The Difference¹⁵⁸ principles – *Be curious, Be present, Reimagine* – provide a framework through which societal groups can learn to live well together while valuing their differences.

Church schools cannot seek to resolve race-based bullying solely through the rationale of being equal in Christ. For centuries, there has been a history of racial inequality in our country, churches and schools. Ignoring this inequality silences the victim and perpetrator without resolving the issue faced. Schools must acknowledge that the issue of racial discrimination is an uncomfortable one that must be faced directly, therefore pupil behaviours of discomfort, avoidance and distraction must be managed well. Where pupils and adults are from UKME/GMH heritage groups that have longstanding, sustained racism towards them in general society, schools must make greater additional efforts to ensure safety from race-based bullying within the school.

By being **curious**, pupils learn cultural humility through listening to the stories of others and seeing the world through their eyes. In being **present**, students learn to encounter others with authenticity. This allows them to **reimagine** how they might live well in the company of others different to themselves.

Church schools need to be proactive in developing global understanding. They should look beyond their immediate community to ensure racial difference is understood in a balanced way. Learning is fundamental for all racial groups to demonstrate respect and build relationships with each other.

¹⁵⁴ Church of England, [From Lament to Action, The Report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce](#), 2021, page 8

¹⁵⁵ Church of England, [Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good](#), 2016

¹⁵⁶ Church of England Foundational for Educational Leadership, [Our Hope for a Flourishing School System](#), page 16

¹⁵⁷ Church of England, [From Lament to Action, The Report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce](#), 2021

¹⁵⁸ Church of England, [The course - Difference: Make your faith count in a complex and divided world](#)



3.2 Understanding racial trauma¹⁵⁹

Racial trauma in schools refers to the emotional and psychological harm that pupils experience as a result of racism, discrimination, and microaggressions within the school environment. This trauma can stem from both overt acts of racism, as well as more subtle, systemic forms of racial bias. The effects of racial trauma in schools are profound and can manifest in various ways, affecting pupils' well-being, academic performance, and social interactions. Those experiencing race-based bullying may feel constant anxiety or stress about being targeted, judged or unfairly treated based on their race. They may become frustrated and angry not just about specific incidents, but also about broader injustices in society. In more extreme cases, this may develop symptoms of high trauma such as intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance and withdrawn behaviour¹⁶⁰.

Although high levels of resilience may be demonstrated by those exposed to race-based bullying, the repetitive, sustained incidents can lead to significant emotional trauma also known as racial trauma. In some cases, bullying based on identity can threaten a person's sense of self-worth, self-esteem and belonging. In other cases, anger and resentment build towards the initial perpetrators which can escalate into threatening or violent behaviour from the initial victim. There are recognised health implications as the witnessing or experiencing racism leads to heightened stressors within the body which have significant impact on mental and physical health.

3.3 How the Church school community can address the challenges of race-based bullying

3.3.1 Governor action around race-based bullying

Governance play a critical role in shaping and overseeing policies and practices that ensure the safety, well-being, and inclusivity of pupils. When it comes to race-based bullying, governors have a responsibility to take proactive, comprehensive actions that not only address the immediate incidents but also work towards a long-term culture of respect, equity, and diversity.

Their audit of the effectiveness of school policy, reporting of incidents and school action around incidents is instrumental in challenging existing practice and helping schools to consistently improve. Whilst antiracism is everyone's responsibility, it is recommended that every governing body should have a governor responsible for ensuring racism is dealt with in a timely and effective way. Governors should ensure that there are safe, accessible, and confidential ways for pupils to report instances of race-based bullying. This includes online platforms or drop-box systems for anonymous submissions, alongside trusted adults who can intervene. Governors should ensure they are well-trained in antiracism education, cultural competency and inclusive practice, in order that their strategic leadership of the Christian vision of the school is effective.

Governors can also play a significant role in developing reconciliation and restoring relationships after bullying has taken place. Addressing racial divides and injustices is crucial for spiritual health and unity in the body of Christ. This forgiveness is not an excuse for perpetuating harm but a call for both the victim and perpetrator to work toward reconciliation.

3.3.2 Working with parents and carers

Church schools must make clear to parents and carers that they are committed to fostering a positive school culture, one in which racism, racial discrimination and race-based bullying is not accepted. Setting a positive

¹⁵⁹ UK Trauma Council, [A Review of the Evidence: Understanding Educational Experiences of Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children](#)

¹⁶⁰ Marc Bush and others, [Addressing Adversity: Prioritising adversity and trauma-informed care for children and young people in England](#), 2018, Chapter 14



culture where every individual feels they can belong ensures a school environment where the safety and well-being of marginalised groups is significantly important.

Parents and carers should be made aware how the school defines what constitutes racial bullying and the steps to be taken to repair harm caused by those who engage in such behaviour. The school needs to be clear with parents and carers how they prioritise the needs of the person harmed. Educating parents and carers about the importance of respect and anti-racism can help prevent instances of racial bullying that may originate from home or community influences. Schools can provide resources or lead workshops for parents to help them support positive behaviour in their pupils.

3.3.3 Working with local communities

Church schools should create a welcoming environment where every pupil feels valued and respected. This can be extended to the wider community through campaigns and celebrations of cultural diversity, and events that highlight different racial and cultural experiences. Community-led initiatives can support school efforts towards eliminating racial bias and affirming antibullying actions. By working in partnership, schools and community leaders can share resources around cohesive community development, exploring local histories, speaking with community role models or creating projects exploring antibullying.

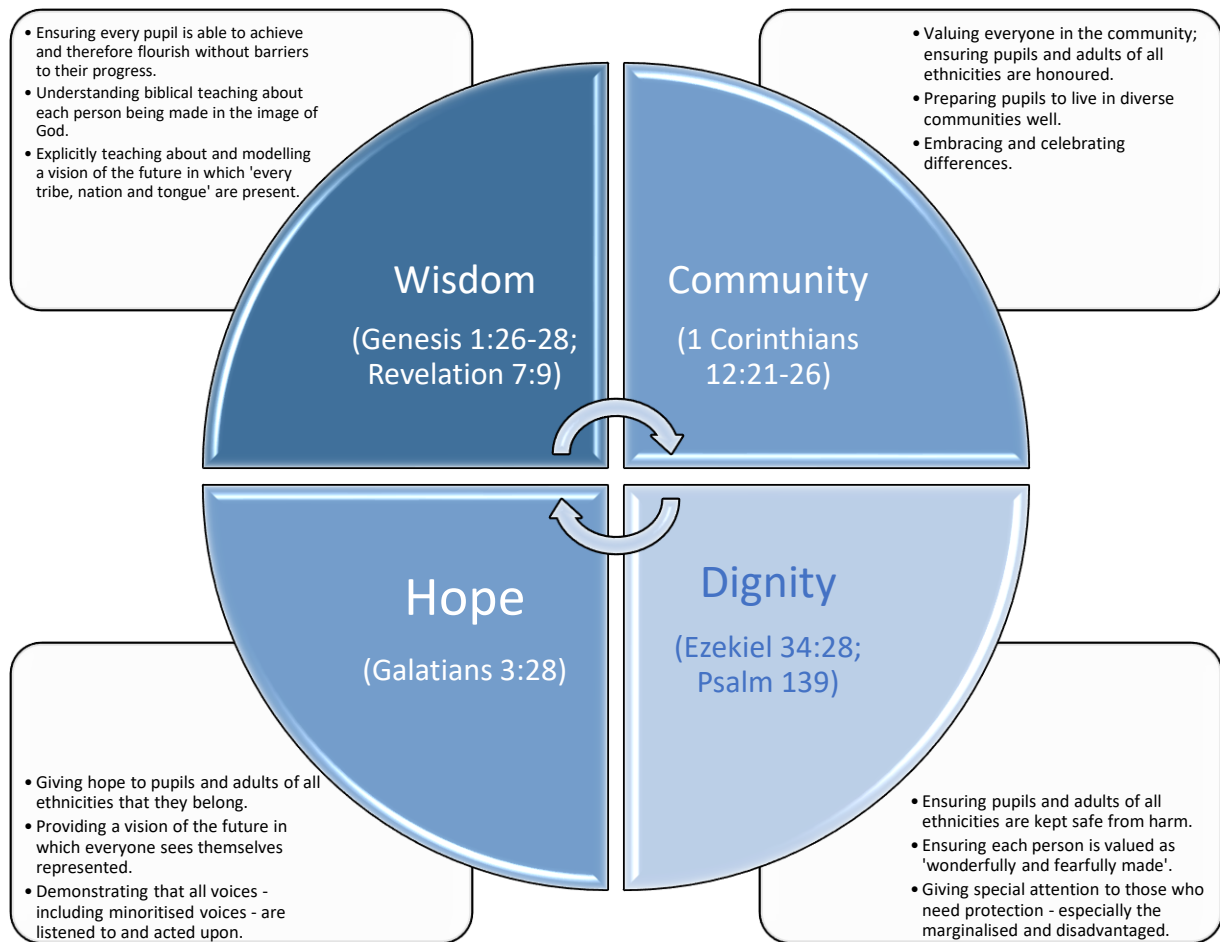
Through dialogue, shared perspectives may be considered during decision making. Church schools have a vital role to play in celebrating the different ethnicities and nationalities represented within their local community.

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

A Church school should be positively proactive in establishing the habits, behaviours and culture that enable the celebration of difference. The Church of England's Vision for Education specifically encourages this by saying 'how schools deal with difference is a critical indicator of their quality.'¹⁶¹

The 'life in all its fullness' that this vision aims for in every school must be for every pupil and adult; it is not possible to have flourishing for some without flourishing for all. Through wisdom, community, dignity and hope, a school can begin to map out the ways in which they will create the kind of welcoming and inclusive culture that can prevent race-based bullying, and thus bring about flourishing for all.

¹⁶¹ Church of England, [Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good](#), 2016



Moreover, many Church schools' Christian vision statements also speak about reconciliation, justice, forgiveness, and unity. These principles are vital when addressing the harms of racism and working towards healing and justice in the Church and society. Church schools, guided by their theologically rooted Christian vision, can encourage reconciliation¹⁶² through acknowledging harm, offering forgiveness, promoting justice, and working towards unity in Christ. The process of reconciliation after racism is rooted in the biblical call to love one another, break down divisions, and seek peace and justice for all people, regardless of their race or background.

Adults in schools have a responsibility to model positive behaviour for children and young people. This means actively working together to make school communities more inclusive for all its members.¹⁶³ For Christians, embodying kindness, compassion and care means demonstrating allyship for and with those who have experienced, or are experiencing, race-based bullying. Being an ally means supporting someone who is being treated unfairly or discriminated against, providing support and advocacy.

¹⁶² Church of England Foundational for Educational Leadership, [Our Hope for a Flourishing School System](#), page 12

¹⁶³ Frances Akinde, *Be an Ally, not a Bystander*, 2023, page 24



5. What do Church schools need to attend to in order to tackle race-based bullying effectively?

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

5.1 Preventing race-based bullying

Schools may seek to address race-based bullying through generalised bullying strategies. While this may address the specific bullying incident in the short term, the underlying racial discrimination that fostered the bullying will linger. In the first instance, schools must assess and address the presence of behaviours that create social hierarchies within friendship groups that determine the exclusion or acceptance of others. Increased bystander effect may also occur as those witnessing the bullying may choose not to speak out thereby creating a negative social norm within the school's culture. This must be proactively tackled to ensure that race-based bullying is everyone's business.

Schools should have in place robust policies, underpinned by their Christian vision, that make clear the school's expectations and processes around race-based bullying. It should include actions to be taken by the child, staff, parent and families in the event of an incident.

Race-based antibullying practice needs to consider various factors – individual, school, family and community. Resultantly, a well-planned, proactive whole school approach to prevention is more effective than reactive case by case decision making¹⁶⁴.

5.1.1 Policies and culture

A school's anti-bullying policy should apply to all members of the school community, including pupils, staff, and visitors. This ensures that any racial bullying directed at pupils or adults is equally addressed.

The school should have a policy in place which clearly defines what constitutes bullying, discrimination and harassment, including race-based bullying. It should explicitly include racial harassment, such as name-calling, physical assault, exclusion, and any form of discriminatory behaviour based on race or ethnicity. It should also be clear on the prevention, reaction and sanction for incidents, as well as circumstances where the school may involve additional public services such as police or social care services.

The duty of care around race-based bullying is not limited to Antibullying policies. Safeguarding & Child protection, Behaviour, and Curriculum Policies may also apply for pupils. For adults working within the school, Grievance and Whistleblowing policies may also apply, as would the Staff Code of Conduct.

School staff must ensure they know the context of their pupils well. Understanding the racial, ethnic and nationality status of pupils allows for pre-emptive actions across the school body. On occasion, it may be helpful to understand the wider social views of the community, in order to be alert to any racist narratives that might be found amongst the pupils or families represented within the school. By looking beyond the interpersonal impacts of race-based bullying, schools should proactively examine the wider antiracist culture within their context. Creating, improving and sustaining an antiracist culture should not be a reactive action, only undertaken when incidents occur, but seen in all schools as a core part of safeguarding. Creating a culture of inclusion and

¹⁶⁴H Gaffney, [Antibullying programmes: Toolkit technical report](#), 2021



belonging promotes the wellbeing of diverse members of the school community, proactively establishes behaviour expectations and deters bullying.

5.2 Ensuring Psychological Safety

Difference should be embraced, not erased. It is important to avoid saying or indicating that the colour of a person's skin is of no importance. While the intention of judging people on the merit of their individualism may be positive, it shouldn't ignore the reality of difference. Schools should encourage cultural curiosity with positive intent. Through *being curious* and *being present*, pupils can develop racial understanding and respect.

Schools should provide space for discourse. It is essential that schools are proactive in enabling discussions where individuals can safely speak about their heritages. The provision of all of the stages of psychological safety¹⁶⁵ – Inclusion safety, Learner safety, Contributor safety and Challenger safety – connect to provide a space to speak about race for the clearing of misconceptions, and ultimately, may reduce incidences of race-based bullying.

5.3 Responding to race-based bullying

If race-based bullying does occur, Church schools should engage in a prompt, factually accurate investigation involving the perpetrator, victim and bystanders. This should occur in every instance whether the victim or perpetrators are adults or pupils. Victims of racist comments should be encouraged to report not respond in each instance. An effective antibullying process is one in which the victim can trust that racist incidences will be dealt with swiftly, seriously and fairly. This builds confidence that there is a truly antiracist culture within the school. The recording of factual occurrences must be done objectively but considerately so as not to exacerbate the racial trauma already experienced via bullying. Listening well to each person involved allows a full picture of the experience to be built. Being repetitively asked the same question to elicit facts may be seen by the victim or perpetrator as a sign of mistrust. It is important to remember that with each repetition, the victim is being asked to relive a possibly traumatic experience. Schools should pay attention to the impact of the incident and respond to the manner in which the victim processes the incident. For example, younger pupils asking about racist words can be a sign of seeking understanding of their experience, whereas older pupils may feel anger or fear to move around the school.

Proactive bystander behaviour creates a healthy environment for antiracism. Schools should pay due attention to the behaviours displayed by witnesses of incidents as it provides insight into the antiracist culture of the school. Schools should strive to be places where an antibullying culture is strong and bystanders are active in the reporting and preventing bullying.

The Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead must be confident in seeking additional advice around reporting whenever required. In extreme cases, incidents of race-based bullying may constitute hate crimes and warrant reporting to additional services such as the police or under the PREVENT duty. Schools have a legal duty to do so when required.

Schools should be prepared for working with the parents and carers of those involved in race-based bullying. Parents may need to be reassured that their child is safe within the wider school community, despite any incident that occurs. Ensuring parental confidence in the antibullying process provides reassurances around safety while their children are in school. This must be supported by clear action. Similarly, some parents and carers may challenge the school's race-based antibullying procedures and sanctions. Schools should have a

¹⁶⁵ Advance HE, [Education for Mental Health Toolkit - Psychologically safe learning environment](#)



clear process for allowing them to do so. The Governing board should have systems in place to regularly check that the school has fairly implemented its antibullying policy procedures.

5.4 Using the Challenge, Support, Report Framework

Schools need to undertake three courses of action:



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

5.4.1 Challenge

All staff (teachers and support staff) should be trained on recognising and addressing race-based bullying. This includes understanding the effects of racism and learning how to intervene appropriately in situations where racial bullying is happening.

Schools should deal with low-level disruptive incidences that have racist connotations by explaining why the behaviour is offensive and unacceptable. They must avoid ignoring the comments and focus on the perpetrator's behaviour, rather than the individual involved. Schools should ensure that appropriate disciplinary actions around race-based bullying are consistently applied. It is important that there are clear consequences for perpetrators of race-based bullying as a part of the school's strategy to demonstrate that such behaviour will not be tolerated.

Staff should be trained in conflict resolution and restorative practices to address racial issues that may arise in the classroom or on the playground. The more confident staff are in this area the better equipped they are to promote healthy communication that fosters understanding.

5.4.2 Supporting

Where race-based bullying has been reported by pupils, their families, or staff, the school should act swiftly. This recognises the impact that continual racist actions or attitudes can have on victims. The victim's needs should never be ignored in order to protect a perpetrator's reputation. Victims need ongoing support and vigilance from both staff and pupils to protect them from future harm.

Perpetrators will also require support; to understand the core messages they have heard or believed which have led them to engage in race-based bullying, to know how to speak and act with dignity and respect towards their peers and the chance for reconciliation, for example through restorative justice practices.

Further support is required to facilitate restorative practices to repair relationships after incidents of race-based bullying. Restoring dignity and respect through dialogue, understanding and accountability is a high-level skill that, with an emotionally charged situation such as race-based bullying, requires clear structures of managing discourse and skilful mediation.



5.4.3 Reporting

The reporting of race-based bullying should be factual, clear, concise and, where needed, contain details of incidents. Included should be a way of capturing the voice of the victim and the perpetrator, and where possible information as to what led to their actions. The reaction to the bullying incidents by those who witnessed should also be recorded. All reports should be followed up, with clear actions that the school will take regarding the victim, perpetrator, bystander and wider school community.

As a part of good safeguarding practice, incidents which have racist elements to them, e.g. verbal abuse, harassment etc, should form part of the Headteacher's report to the Governing Board.

Schools should train all stakeholders to be able to report incidents effectively. They should ensure that all members within the school are adequately equipped to discuss issues of racial justice. This entails governing boards, senior leadership and all school staff having demonstrable understanding of racial justice in their words and practice. This ensures that the school's culture, policies and practices can be fully applied across the whole school and can be challenged when this is not the case.

There should be clear communication with parents, carers and the wider community around the school's stance against race-based bullying and the Christian beliefs that underpin that stance.

5.5 Working in partnership

Schools may find it helpful to partner with local and national organisations that can support their provision. This allows for the extension of anti-racism initiatives through community organisations that can provide additional cultural resource, understanding and expertise. Doing so can send a clear message to minoritised groups within a school's community that they are valued. It is important when selecting external partners to have a clear understanding of their core values, to ensure they align with those of the school. Governors should be made aware of the partnership organisations working within the school.

6. Phase specific guidance for Church schools

6.1 Guidance for all phases

Area of Focus	Church School General Guidance (all phases)
School Culture, Policy & Training	• The school culture should promote mutual respect for people of all races, ethnicities and nationalities. It should highlight the importance of approaching differences with interested curiosity and welcoming others to join in the community. • Clear communication with parents and families is required to ensure that the culture of inclusion and belonging is part of a well understood social contract. • Any policy around race-based bullying should consider the age and understanding of the child. Policies should have a simplified version that students can readily understand. • Supporting documents for policies should be clear and readily available. This will ensure data is collected on race-based incidents in a systematic and transparent manner and analysed regularly. This will allow patterns to be



	identified which ensures the long-term effectiveness of race-based antibullying efforts. • There should be multiple pupil-friendly means of reporting race-based bullying, e.g. speaking to trusted adults, worry box, mentors, available across the school. • Staff training should be regularly undertaken on understanding the various contributing factors to race-based bullying. Staff should be taught how to respond to incidents in an age-appropriate manner to students and how to hold difficult conversations with parents and carers. Staff should also receive training in trauma-informed/ relational approaches in order to support pupils where appropriate. • In many schools, restorative justice has been used effectively to repair the harm done by bullying while rebuilding relationships across pupils. If undertaken, staff should be well-trained in the practice.
Curriculum	• Schools should teach pupils about racial and ethnic differences through the curriculum and normalise the use of diverse imagery and resources. This should include stories and activities in which racially marginalised characters have central roles¹⁶⁶. It may also consist of celebration of cultural events, integration of diverse music and different forms of worship. • Sharing the stories of those within the community supports educating pupils around difference in an experiential way. • Discussions around racial equality should not be limited only to PSHE, RSE or RE but should form part of discussion throughout the curriculum.
Community Context	• Contextual understanding of the family and community environment can support schools in assessing the potential risk of racist incidents towards pupils and adults in the school. • For some schools, this will be a challenging area to navigate as cohesive agreement on race-based bullying may require the Church school to stand firmly on their Christian principles. Engagement with Church and community leaders, where possible, may support the wider community's understanding of the school's principles.
Managing bullying towards adults	• Schools should take seriously and provide support for staff members who experience race-based bullying. Within a strong antibullying culture, pupils and adults alike feel safe, seen and supported to belong within the school community. However, race-based bullying from pupils towards adults can create an atmosphere that undermines the integrity of the adult, thereby negatively affecting the adult's ability to do their jobs. • Schools should have clear <i>Antibullying and Behaviour</i> policies, which can be used in cases where pupils may attempt to harass, discriminate or bully a member of staff. School policies should explicitly state what protection is in place against bullying and harassment of members of staff by pupils. They should ensure that the policy applies to pupils' interactions with adults and sets clear, enforceable consequences for racial harassment. • Similarly, there should be clear <i>Whistleblowing, Grievance, Staff conduct</i> policies in place where incidents occur across adults.

¹⁶⁶ CLPE, [Reflecting Realities Research](#)



	• Schools should have strong recording and reporting systems that allow accusations and incidences that indicate race-based bullying or a culture of race-based bullying to be identified early. The intent and the impact of actions must be questioned and dealt with. Every report of race-based bullying needs to be treated seriously through a transparent process. This should include processes for handling subtle forms of discriminatory or bullying behaviours. • Senior leadership teams and governing boards should have processes in place that enable them to address race-based bullying against adults, whether perpetrated by pupils or staff. Staff should feel safe to report bullying without fear of retaliation. • Leaders should actively support any affected adult who is dealing with persistent, continual abuse in the classroom. This helps ensure that the targeted adults can process their feelings, cope with stress, and be reassured that the school is doing its utmost to ensure their professional presence is fully respected.
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6.2 Primary School Specific Guidance

Area of Focus	Primary School Specific Guidance
School Culture, Policy & Training	• Intentional work, starting in the Early Years, can support young pupils' understanding of diversity as something to be celebrated. This is foundational to older pupils' understanding of the need to respect and appreciate difference. • The Difference principles – Be curious, be present, Reimagine- provide a helpful framework for students to explore global racial difference within the school curriculum. It allows stereotypes to be challenged early and can teach means of resolving unfair or unkind behaviours. • Staff should be mindful of their own behaviours that may seemingly ascribe negative connotations to any child that ignore cultural understanding of the pupil's context. • Collective Worship can be utilised to ensure whole school understanding of core school values, including those that underpin anti-bullying work. It can provide pupils with a framework for responding to incidents of racism, harassment or race-based bullying. It should clarify what they can proactively do, either as witnesses or victims to such behaviours. • Pupils should be taught the importance of allyship and shared values. This reinforces the concept that the prevention of bullying is the responsibility of the whole school collectively. Standing up for others can make a difference in building psychological safety across the school. • School staff should be trained on holding discussions around race with students. Within the younger pupils, the understanding of race or bullying may be limited, therefore their ability to understand or report an incident is lowered. • Where incidents have occurred, school policy should ensure that those involved are kept informed of the steps being taken to address the bullying.



	Where pupils can witness actions being undertaken, their confidence in the school's culture and processes grow.
Curriculum	• Early Years displays should model inclusive language and diverse cultural experiences. This includes the use of diverse books and media that utilises characters of different ethnicities, cultures, music etc. • Throughout the primary curriculum, pupils should have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of cultures, ethnicities and faith communities. This provides the opportunity for pupils to develop positive attitudes towards those who are different to them, as well as countering ignorance. • Celebrating Black History Month is a good place to start. For those where this is a common practice, already embedded into the annual calendar of the school, they might look at the Welsh model of <i>Black History 365</i>. The ongoing learning about the lives of UKME/GMH people throughout history is critical in building an inclusive culture where all are able to belong.
Language use within the school	• Young pupils sometimes may repeat words or statements overheard at home. Whether intentional or not, schools must act on use of the use of racist language to pre-empt repetitive use in the future. The school must have a clear policy for reporting, responding and tracking such occurrences. • On occasion, the process may include sanctions, senior leaders speaking with parents and carers or, in some cases, reporting to external services. It is important that all involved understand that such language is harmful and has no place within the school community. • Schools may choose to provide pupils with explicit rehearsed responses and action they can use should they hear racist or discriminatory language being used at school. By teaching pupils ways to respond or seek help, they can feel more empowered to combat race-based bullying.

6.3 Secondary School Specific Guidance

Area of focus	Secondary School Specific Guidance
Culture, Policy & Training	• With secondary aged pupils the required approach to race-based bullying requires respect for their growing autonomy, and acknowledgment of their capacity for critical thinking and emotional complexity. Schools should state clearly a non-negotiable approach to racism and ensure that the school culture actively rejects racial discrimination and bullying. • Pupils should be provided with a sociological understanding of the evolution of race in society. This will allow schools to better explore the elements of developing an inclusive culture that appreciates cultural differences. • Schools should implement programmes that not only intervene in bullying cases but also engage in long-term prevention by addressing the root causes of bullying, such as not perpetuating stereotypes by exploring a range of stories and lived experience, and fostering curiosity and understanding about other cultures. • Schools should discourage the use of “banter” and joking on the basis of race, as these can often take the form of harmful microaggressions. Whenever



	possible, schools should acknowledge the perspective of the pupil. Questions such as “How can I best support you?” offer respect for the involvement of the pupil. • Schools must consistently review their recruitment practices, governance structures, and the training provided to ensure they promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
Curriculum	• Church schools should look for opportunities within the curriculum to promote understanding, empathy, and respect for different cultures, races, and ethnicities. This includes teaching about historical and contemporary issues related to racism, colonialism, and the importance of diversity in a context-specific way. • Where schools are not ethnically diverse, they should be proactive in facilitating opportunities for racism to be discussed. • Schools should discuss how racial bullying occurs on social networks and how to report, challenge and deal with racist language and content online. • Schools should teach a diverse and inclusive curriculum that includes the histories, cultures, and contributions of communities from UKME backgrounds. This helps foster understanding and respect across cultures. • They should encourage intercultural dialogue and partnerships, creating spaces where topics affecting diverse groups can be shared to provide varied perspectives, build understanding, and work towards mutual respect.
Language use within the school	• Staff should utilise pre-prepared scripts to simultaneously convey that the behaviour is unacceptable while determining the intent. E.g. “What was your intention when you said that?” “How might someone interpret that action?” “That is neither our culture nor our values here. Can you explain why that feels acceptable to you?” or “It sounds like there are a lot of assumptions you have made. How might we discuss these together?” At all stages, staff should maintain that it is the behaviours within race-based bullying that are unacceptable, not the person. • In order to understand the pupil’s use of language, active listening, without lecturing, is required. It allows for discussion of personal experiences or biases which may lead to better contextual understanding. • Schools should be mindful of the levels of peer influence that can undermine a school’s culture. The risk of peers copying undesirable behaviour or victim blaming, should be proactively considered and prevented as far as possible by the school.
Pastoral Guidance	• Church schools need to be discerning when working with community groups and organisations to ensure messages accurately reflect the kind of culture the school is working to create. Moreover, when working with mentors, these need to be safely and carefully chosen. The use of role models from identified groups may hold greater influence for young people as there is a higher sense of openness without judgment within the interactions. The aim is also to make the presence of difference in the global community an everyday reality for the school community. • Schools should monitor closely the attendance of pupils who have reported racialised incidents. With the isolation that race- based bullying can cause,



	pupils may be less likely to attend, thereby affecting their academic and pastoral development¹⁶⁷. • Pupil-led initiatives that promote inclusivity or provide peer support can be utilised to promote a respectful environment across the school body. • Counselling, peer support programmes, and restorative justice can help victims of race-based bullying rebuild their confidence and ensure they do not feel isolated. • Staff should be equipped with strategies and communication techniques for addressing conflicts or de-escalating engagement in race-based bullying.
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6.4 Guidance for Diocesan Boards of Education

In guiding the spiritual development of Church schools, Diocesan Boards play a key role in fostering understanding and respect for worldwide cultures and traditions. By ensuring wider points of view are considered in policy, procedures and school experiences, the Diocesan Board can encourage empathy, the teaching of shared values such as equity and justice as well as provide an inclusive environment across the diocesan schools. Diocesan boards may also provide training, resources and model policies for Church schools to support their practices around race-based bullying.

7. How do issues around race-based antibullying practice interact with other characteristics?

There is a cumulative effect when an individual possesses more than one of the marginalised characteristics which increases the likelihood of bullying. While race is normally a visible physical characteristic, the presence of other characteristics such as disability can lead to bullying of an individual from both outside and within their racialised group.

Gender is a significant factor in race-based bullying as stereotypes about expected roles and behaviours increases the level of risk and response for specific groups. For example, Black males may find themselves at increased risk of physical harm due to stereotypes around violence, whereas Black females may face verbal bullying that consistently attacks their body image.¹⁶⁸ Sexist bullying will be covered in Part F.

Religion is also a significant factor in race-based bullying. Antisemitism intertwines ethnic, cultural and religious aspects of the Jewish community with biased demeaning viewpoints. Pupils risk being bullied with regard to physical features, denial of Jewish history or through assumed standpoints during periods of wider political conflict. Individuals racialised as brown or with Middle Eastern physical features may be assumed to be Muslim and face Islamophobic behaviours towards them. Pupils may also risk bullying when the faith related practice they undertake such as fasting, praying or wearing traditional clothing intersects with their race. They risk

¹⁶⁷ House of Commons Library, [Bullying in UK Schools](#), 2020

¹⁶⁸ Eslea, M., & Mukhtar, K. Bullying and racism among Asian schoolchildren in Britain. *Educational Research*, 42(2), 207–217, 2020



physical bullying in the removal of items or disruption of their prayer. Faith-based bullying will be covered in more depth in Part E.

The *lifestyle and culture* of some groups increases their risk of race-based bullying. For example, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups report increased levels of exclusion from spaces, feeling ignored by school staff and facing high levels of name-calling.¹⁶⁹

For recommendations around *LGB/Gender questioning children* and LGBT+ adults, please refer to Part B.

Socioeconomic disadvantage and poverty

Race-based bullying and poverty are deeply interconnected, with poverty often exacerbating the impacts of racial bullying and vice versa. The experiences of pupils who face both racism and poverty are compounded, leading to additional emotional, social, and academic challenges. Pupils living in challenging socioeconomic disadvantage may have diminished access to resources that allow them to cope with the trauma of race-based bullying. They might lack access to counselling and mental health services, extracurricular activities that foster confidence, or a supportive home environment that can help them process their experiences. They are less likely to report incidents thereby delaying the recognition of race-based bullying. Conversely, they may also choose to become perpetrators of race-based bullying in an attempt to distract from their own circumstances. Bullying on the basis of socio-economic disadvantage will be covered in Part G.

Negative stereotypes such as “lazy” or “unentitled” within some racial groups can be amplified when combined with poverty.

March 2025

¹⁶⁹ Centre of the Dynamics of Ethnicity, [Evidence for Equality National Survey](#)
The Guardian, [Social barriers faced by Roma, Gypsies and Travellers laid bare in equality survey](#), 9 April 2023
The Traveller Movement, [The last acceptable form of racism?](#), September 2017



Appendix 1: Pupil Survey Responses

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

Additional responses:

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

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

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

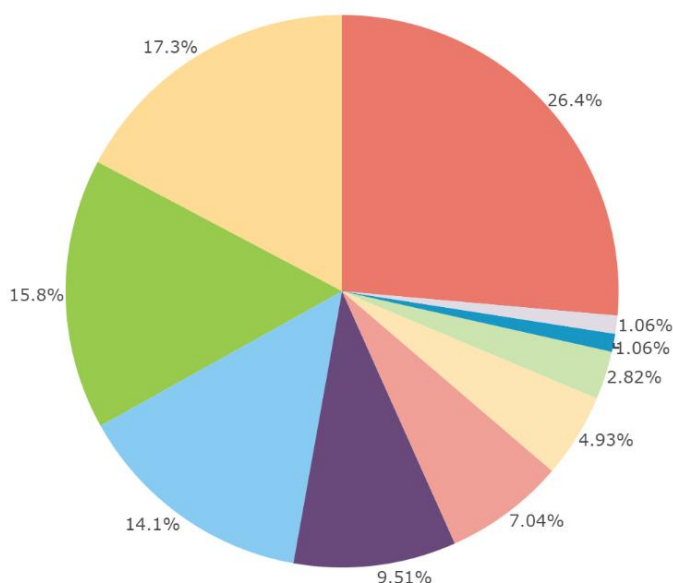
'I personally have been bullied so I know the difference the school can make'.
'Listen to students when we are trying to explain it' and 'make more open space to talk about it freely.'
'Talk to people and not just the outspoken kids.'
'Support groups for people who have experienced bullying.'
'Relatable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



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

Awareness of Bullying

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



CHOICE	
■	Being (or thought to be) gay...
■	Something else
■	A disability (something phys...
■	The colour of a person's skin
■	Presenting as a different ge...
■	(no answer)
■	Culture or language
■	Gender (being male or female)
■	Religion or beliefs
■	Who is in someone's family (...)



Appendix 2: Glossary for Part B

In *Flourishing for All*, we speak about ‘LGB/GQ pupils’ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or gender questioning) or ‘pupils who are (or perceived to be) LGB/GQ’. This follows the language used by the Department for Education in ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)’. ¹⁷⁰ In recognition that gender reassignment remains a protected characteristic in the Equalities Act 2010, we refer to adults in the document as LGBT+ or transgender. This document also acknowledges that some pupils are bullied because they appear to be LGB/GQ, and some adults because they appear to be LGBT+, regardless of whether that is in fact accurate.

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

This glossary draws upon the glossary in ‘Living in Love and Faith’¹⁷¹ alongside language from the current draft Department for Education guidance on Gender Questioning Children¹⁷² and the 2024 Cass Review.¹⁷³

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

Terms that some people may use to describe their sexuality:

Lesbian

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

Gay

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

Bisexual

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

Homosexual

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

¹⁷⁰ Gov.uk Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2024, [Internet] Available at: [Keeping children safe in education 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education-2024), p55

¹⁷¹ Church of England *Living in Love and Faith* (2020) Church House Publishing p425-7

¹⁷² Department for Education, Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance, December 2023, [Internet], Available at : https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender-questioning-children-proposed-guidance/supporting_documents/Gender%20Questioning%20Children%20%20nonstatutory%20guidance.pdf

¹⁷³ Dr Hillary Cass, Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people: Final report, April 2024 [Internet], Available at : https://cass.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CassReview_Final.pdf

**Heterosexual**

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

Asexual

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

Sex and Gender

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

Sex

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

Gender

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

Gender questioning

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

Gender Identity¹⁷⁴

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

Cisgender

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

Non-binary

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

Transgender man

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

Transgender woman

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

¹⁷⁴ Current government guidance states that this is a 'contested belief'. Department for Education, Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance, December 2023, [Internet], Available at : [Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gender-questioning-children-non-statutory-guidance)



Transsexual

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

Gender incongruence

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

Gender dysphoria

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

Gender reassignment

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

Gender Recognition Certificate

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

Transition

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

Social transition¹⁷⁵

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

Watchful waiting¹⁷⁶

An approach by which a child/young person's gender journey is observed (without intervention) to see how their gender identity and expression naturally evolves.¹⁷⁷

Pronouns¹⁷⁸

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

¹⁷⁵ Government guidance on socially transitioning can be found throughout [Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁷⁶ Government guidance on watchful waiting can be found on page 9 of [Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁷⁷ [CassReview_Final.pdf \(independent-review.uk\)](#) p246

¹⁷⁸ Government guidance on the use of pronouns for pupils questioning their gender can be found on page 13 of [Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

**Intersex**

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

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

Other related terms:**Queer**

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

Questioning

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

Coming out

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



Appendix 3: Glossary for Part C

Antiracism

Active efforts to oppose racism and promote racial equity in policies, practices, and attitudes.

Bullying

Repeated behaviour intended to harm someone physically, emotionally, or socially, often targeting specific groups based on identity.

Calling In

A private or small-group approach to address harmful behaviour constructively and promote learning.

Calling Out

Publicly highlighting harmful behaviour or language to raise awareness and accountability.

Covert Bullying

Subtle, indirect actions such as exclusion, microaggressions, or withholding opportunities, often harder to identify.

Cultural Competence

The ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

Ethnic Nationalism

Advocacy for the interests of a specific ethnic group, often tied to national identity.

Ethnicity

A category of identity based on shared cultural, historical, or geographical traditions.

Hate Crime

A criminal act motivated by hostility or prejudice toward a person's race, religion, or other protected characteristic.

Hate Speech

Language that incites hatred or discrimination against individuals or groups based on identity.

Intersectionality

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, creating overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Microaggression

Everyday subtle, indirect, or unintentional discrimination against marginalized groups.

Nationality

The status of belonging to a particular nation, often associated with legal rights and identity.

Overt Bullying

Direct and explicit acts of aggression, such as physical violence, verbal insults, or hate symbols.

**Protected Characteristics**

Attributes protected under the Equality Act 2010, including race, religion, gender, disability, and more.

Race

A socially constructed category used to classify people based on perceived physical differences.

Racial Trauma

Psychological and emotional harm resulting from experiences of racism or discrimination.

Restorative Practices

Approaches focused on repairing harm, rebuilding trust, and restoring relationships after conflict or harm.

Social Exclusion

The deliberate or unintentional ostracization of individuals or groups from activities, opportunities, or social circles.

Trauma-Informed Approach

An organizational framework that recognizes and responds to the impact of trauma, ensuring a safe and supportive environment.