



INCLUSION OF ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA IN SCHOOL BULLYING POLICY

It is widely recognised that homophobic bullying needs to be covered as a specific issue within a school's bullying policy. Listed below is a sample for inclusion in your school's anti-bullying policy.

SAMPLE ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA GUIDELINES:

Your anti-bullying policy will contain information related to types of bullying. The guidelines below have been developed to insert into this section of your policy.

Homophobic Bullying:

Homophobic bullying generally looks like other sorts of bullying, and can include verbal, physical and cyberbullying. (School name) will follow procedures as outlined in this policy in response to homophobic bullying. However, the fact that young people are particularly reluctant to report incidents is a distinctive aspect of this type of bullying, and highlights the importance of identifying the homophobic nature of it when it occurs.

It is (school's name) policy that students' rights and confidentiality around issues of sexuality are respected. We encourage students to disclose homophobic bullying to a staff member, and will ensure that bullying will be taken seriously. No assumptions will be made about the students' sexual preference, nor should the student feel the need to disclose their sexual preference. The following responses may be required when homophobic bullying is identified.

Responding to homophobic language:

The use of homophobic language to suggest that someone or something is inferior is unacceptable. This includes comments such as "That's so gay", or "Those shoes are so gay". It is this school's policy that:

- Students are aware that homophobic language will not be tolerated in the school
- When an incident occurs students will be informed that homophobic language is offensive and will not be tolerated
- If a student makes homophobic remarks, staff will explain the effects that homophobic bullying has on people
- Persistent use of homophobic language will result in the implementation of the consequences within the school's Discipline Policy
- Parents may be contacted by the school
- Serious incidents of homophobic bullying may require Police involvement.

Prevention:

(School name) will take steps to prevent homophobia by:

- Teaching students so that they understand what constitutes homophobic language, and why it is offensive
- Assessing and monitoring the extent of homophobic bullying
- Using inclusive language through out school curriculum
- Use of curriculum opportunities to promote respect for others
- Provide professional learning and support
- Working with bodies such as the Student Representative Council

References:
Writing Themselves In 3. La Trobe University, 2010.
The School Report. Stonewall, 2007 (www.stonewall.org.uk)

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Health
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Fact Sheet:

Homophobia in Schools



Same sex attracted or gender questioning young people who experience homophobia are at greater risk of mental health problems, including suicidal thoughts and behaviours:

- 31% of same sex attracted young people have self harmed, and 37% have considered self harm
- 16% have attempted suicide, and 37% have considered suicide
- Students who have experienced either verbal or physical abuse are 55% more likely to self harm or attempt suicide
- Recent research suggests that higher rates of drug use is a direct result of homophobic abuse, with many young people self-medicating to ease the pain of rejection and hostility from families, schools and communities

(Writing Themselves In 3- La Trobe University 2010)

“
I can't tell anyone because, basically, no-one knows that I am gay... I got punched in the corridor today for example, and I can't tell the teacher because it will involve coming out.
”

Nick, 14, secondary school, *The School Report*

Definition of homophobic bullying within the school context:

Current Australian research indicates that between 9% and 11% of students are same sex attracted (SSA).

Approximately 60% lesbian and gay pupils who experience bullying never report it. If they tell a teacher, 62% report that nothing was done.

Students in your school:

80% of young people who reported homophobic bullying, experienced this abuse at school.

61% of young people reported verbal abuse because of homophobia

18% of young people reported physical abuse because of homophobia

69% reported other forms of homophobia including exclusion and rumours

Young men and gender questioning young people reported more abuse than young women

(Writing Themselves In 3- La Trobe University 2010)

Homophobic language:

Direct name calling (eg poof, faggot, dyke), can be directed towards young people who are same sex attracted, and those who are not.

Commonly used phrases such as 'you're so gay', or 'that's so gay' imply that being gay or lesbian is negative.

A school culture that permits casual use of homophobic language makes it easier for pupils to suffer homophobic name calling and bullying.

Homophobic abuse decreases substantially when schools are proactive and implement effective policies and practices. (See Inclusion of Anti-homophobia in School Bullying Policy)

The inclusion of anti-homophobia guidelines in your school bullying policy will add to the already positive changes that are occurring in schools, to ensure the safety and respect of all students.

For practical examples of discussing and addressing homophobia with students, see “Homophobic Bullying. Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools” (2007) Dept Children, Schools and Families. Available at:

www.schools-out.org.uk/classroom/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/DCSF-Homophobic-Bullying.pdf