

Equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff and pupils

Core principles

- 1. Schools (including those with early years provision) and colleges¹ have an important role to play in combating ignorance and prejudice.***
- 2. Schools and colleges aim to create an environment in which all staff and pupils, whatever their sexuality or gender, feel equally welcome and valued.***
- 3. This statement underlines ATL's commitment to equality, diversity and tolerance, and its challenge to homophobic bullying.***

Education and knowledge are key factors in the encouragement of tolerance, diversity and a free and fair society, since it is through them that ignorance and prejudice are challenged and dispelled. Schools and colleges have an important role to play in combating ignorance and prejudice by working with pupils to foster tolerance and openness to, and awareness of, diversity.

It is also important, particularly for young children, that assumptions are not made that, where pupils and students have two parents, that they are male and female. Assumptions should not be made that a parent's partner is of the opposite sex.

¹ "Colleges" include city technology colleges and specialist colleges. For further education and sixth form colleges and higher education establishments please refer to the joint ATL, AUT and NATFHE Policy Statement on Equality for LGBT staff and students.

Legal issues

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, prohibiting local authorities from “promoting homosexuality” and from “promoting the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”, has been repealed.

Discrimination (including harassment and victimisation) in the context of employment or vocational training on the basis of an individual’s sexual orientation is unlawful.

Homophobia is a clear manifestation of the ignorance and intolerance which so damage society. It is, however, something which is rarely considered in general discussions of prejudice and bullying. Homophobic bullying need not be physical (though it often is): name-calling and refusing to sit with or talk to people are other examples of such bullying.

The following statement and model policy underlines ATL’s commitment to equality, diversity and tolerance. It is intended as permissive rather than proscriptive, to encourage schools and colleges to examine how and what they do, to foster a climate of tolerance and diversity which challenges homophobia.

ATL is committed to a working environment in which staff, pupils and their parents are treated equally and with respect. Homophobia can result in people being treated unequally and without respect. It can lead to discrimination, harassment and bullying in schools and colleges. In order to combat homophobic behaviour we urge you to try and establish a policy based on the following advice.

Model lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality policy

This school/college values all its pupils and staff equally, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender assignment.

Recognising the existence of homophobia in society, the school/college will ensure the following:

- Pupils will not be denied fair and equal treatment because of their sexuality or gender.
- All areas of the curriculum and resources will be closely monitored to see that they do not rely on heterosexist assumptions and that they contain no homophobic material.
- Homophobic abuse, harassment and bullying (e.g. name-calling, derogatory jokes, graffiti, unacceptable or unwanted behaviour, intrusive questions) are serious disciplinary offences, and will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure.
- Staff will not be excluded from employment or promotion because of their sexuality or gender.
- Schools/colleges will provide a supportive environment for staff or pupils who wish it to be known that they are either lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. However, it is the right of the individuals to choose whether they wish to be open about their sexuality in the school or college. To “out” someone, whether staff or pupil without their permission is a form of harassment, and will be treated as such.
- Assumptions will not be made that partners are always of the opposite sex.
- LGBT issues will be included in equality training.
- Monitoring of complaints of homophobic abuse, harassment and bullying should be undertaken at least once a year.
- Staff undergoing medical and surgical procedures related to gender reassignment will receive positive support from the school/college to meet their particular needs during that period.
- Schools/colleges recognise LGBT staff and pupils come from diverse backgrounds, and will strive to ensure that they do not face discrimination either on the grounds of their sexual orientation or with regard to other aspects of their identity (e.g. race, age, religion, disability, belief).

Overall, the school/college aims to create an environment in which all staff and pupils, whatever their sexuality or gender assignment, feel equally welcome and valued, and in which homophobic behaviour is not tolerated.

Explanation of terms

The terms 'heterosexism' and 'homophobia' are used in this statement in the following sense.

Heterosexism is any negative valuing and discriminatory treatment of individuals and groups who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered or those perceived to be so. It is based on social values which teach that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual. Heterosexism can show itself through practices of institutions and also through the personal behaviour of individuals. These are known respectively as systematic heterosexism and personal heterosexism. Expressions of dislike, hate or fear based on heterosexism are usually known as homophobia, although the terms lesbophobia and biphobia are also coming into use.

The reactions to LGBT people can range from indifference to denied personal and professional opportunities, through to harassment and violence. These reactions often leave LGBT people feeling excluded and unsafe in a heterosexist environment.

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