

Teaching children about diverse families

LGBT-inclusive education is important for children's wellbeing

by [Annie Brookman-Byrne](#)
October 23, 2019

As of 2020, all schoolchildren in England will receive lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)-inclusive sex and relationships education. This exciting move forward will benefit pupils, families, and teachers.

From September 2020, all primary schools in England will teach their pupils about different families, while secondary schools will teach LGBT-inclusive sex and relationships education. [Government guidance](#) states that schoolchildren should understand the importance of equality and respect with regards to sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

A [2017 report](#) showed that almost half of LGBT pupils are bullied, and while homophobic language had decreased since 2012, over half of LGBT pupils still reported hearing homophobic slurs 'frequently' or 'often'. LGBT pupils can feel [isolated or abnormal](#). The charity [Stonewall](#) believes that LGBT-inclusive education will help to reduce bullying, improve the lives of young LGBT people, and increase understanding and respect between all children.

This new compulsory inclusive education will be sensitive and age-appropriate, and integrated across the curriculum rather than within a single teaching session. This will ensure that all pupils access the LGBT-inclusive material; a lesson absence won't mean missing out. Schools can choose when they think it appropriate to teach LGBT content, and how to do this.

In addition to benefiting pupils who are LGBT themselves, this inclusive education will help children from diverse families, of which there are many. Students may have lesbian or gay parents, a transgender parent, a single parent, no parents, separated parents, a bisexual parent who is now in a homosexual relationship. They may have an LGBT sibling or other family member. The list goes on. Students from diverse families will be able to speak more openly about their home lives with greater understanding from their peers.

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LGBT teachers may feel more comfortable at school in the coming years, aware that students will be learning the importance of respect and equality for sexual orientation and gender reassignment. This follows a [dark history](#) in schools in England, Wales, and Scotland. In 1988, Section 28 of the

Local Government Act banned schools from 'promoting' homosexuality, leaving LGBT students and teachers unacknowledged, until Section 28 was repealed in 2000 in Scotland, and in 2003 in English and Welsh schools. In the intervening time there has been no legislation for compulsory teaching about LGBT people.

Thanks to the new legislation, students and teachers who previously would have hidden who they, or their families, really were will hopefully feel able to be more open about themselves and their lives. Teachers will be able to provide support for LGBT students who are facing challenges because of who they are. For many this new law comes too late, but it is better late than never.

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