

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

Guidance for Education & Teaching Staff



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In December 2023, the Government sought consultation on non-statutory guidance for schools & colleges about children questioning their gender. This document outlines how VotesforSchools can support teachers in creating a supportive, inclusive, and effective learning environment for LGBTQ+ young people.

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We are very proud to have had input from Just Like Us, on this guidance. They are the LGBTQ+ young people's charity who run School Diversity Week every June, and who currently work with more than 6,000 schools across the UK to ensure they are happy, safe and inclusive for all young people.



WHAT WE MEAN

LGBTQ+ inclusion is of vital importance to VotesforSchools and the resources we produce. We challenge discrimination in all its forms, and promote open-mindedness and compassion towards all members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Successful LGBTQ+ inclusion is reliant on a whole-school approach. By taking the following steps outlined in this document, VotesforSchools - a whole-school solution itself - can help you to embed and uphold these values across your school community. This, in turn, will help to build tolerance, cohesion, and improve outcomes for all.

WHAT WE DO

We know that being informed and curious about the world is key to having resilient, inquisitive, and proactive citizens of the future, who are equipped with the qualities of empathy and tolerance, and the skills of critical thinking and political literacy.

For us, doing this successfully is all about balance. We strive to provide the full picture to both voters and teachers in all that we do, but also do not shy away from challenging and controversial questions. This is because we believe all teachers deserve to feel empowered to have big conversations with their school communities, whether about diversity in our society, the impact of Brexit, or the action being taken on climate change. All our topics give voters the relevant context they need to understand these issues and to consider how they relate to the world in which they live, so that they can contribute meaningfully to not just their peer groups, but to wider society.



ALIGNMENT WITH CURRENT GUIDANCE

Ensuring our resources and platform are in keeping with current guidance and responsibilities is central to ensuring educators feel comfortable having these discussions. That's why we make sure to follow the guidance below:

- [The Equality Act 2010 & schools \(2014\)](#) | More on this in VotesforSchools & SMSC, British Values & Prevent
- [Relationships & Sex and Health Education \(2019\)](#) | More on this in VotesforSchools & Primary PSHE and RSE & Health Education and VotesforSchools & Secondary PSHE and RSE & Health Education
- [Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools \(2021\)](#) | More on this in VotesforSchools & Inspection Bodies
- [Political impartiality in schools](#) | More on this in our Political Impartiality Guidance.

All of the VotesforSchools guidance listed above can be found on your Teacher Dashboard.

WHY WE DO IT

We know that safe and inclusive learning environments lead to better outcomes for all. By ensuring young people feel confident and validated in their identities, they will be better equipped to use their voices and contribute positively to the wider world.

Holding up a mirror to our diverse society through our resources and voting process gives young people the opportunity to develop their worldview beyond that of friends, family members and even online platforms. We recognise the speed with which our world is changing, and seek to demystify some of the most complex questions facing young people today. In our experience, young people are always keen to talk about topical issues, so we see it as our duty to give them space to do this, no matter who they are and how they identify.



HOW WE DO IT

The way we support LGBTQ+ representation and expression is threefold.

Firstly, we include positive examples of LGBTQ+ individuals and groups in all of our resources. At Primary level, this includes images depicting different types of families and scenarios that actively challenge gender stereotypes, in line with the statutory curriculum. At Secondary and College level we maintain this approach, while also making direct references to LGBTQ+ relationships and key issues affecting the community. In all instances, we keep statutory guidance provided for schools in mind.

Secondly, we focus on LGBTQ+-specific topics at various points in the academic year, such as LGBT History Month, WorldPride and School Diversity Week. These topics allow all students (and staff) to think openly about the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+



community and reflect on the barriers and stereotypes that still persist today. We encourage active participation from all young people on these topics, and actively promote the benefits of allyship for everyone. Schools are also provided with signposting for students and staff who would like more information or support.

Thirdly, our voting platform has an LGBTQ+-inclusive option that young people and staff may use at their discretion. We chose the term “Diverse” as we feel this positively distinguishes those who may be questioning their gender identity or who do not feel a strong affiliation with the male or female options.





GENDER IDENTITY IN VOTING

Why a young person's gender needs to be captured as part of the voting process is a question on which we as an organisation are constantly reflecting, both internally and as part of external consultation, such as our Education Advisory Board.

Despite the evolving attitudes towards gender and identity expressed by young people today, certain stereotypes and expectations still remain a barrier for many. We feel that knowing the gender identity of our voters can give important insight into all manner of subjects, from career aspirations, to mental wellbeing, to misogyny & consent. Having oversight of what different demographics of young people think about this is really valuable for the policymakers and influential people with which the resulting insight is shared. Without it, we may not be able to direct support to those who need it most.

Nevertheless, we appreciate that for educators, navigating the question of gender identity as part of the weekly voting process can be daunting. If you or any of your young people feel uncomfortable with this, please click [here](#) to read some suggested methods for gathering votes in the classroom.



WHO WE WORK WITH

The VotesforSchools Team is lucky to have LGBTQ+ representation, and as an organisation we strive to continue our professional development in this area.

We are also fortunate to work with a diverse range of organisations, who generously offer their insights and advice on discussing LGBTQ+ issues in educational settings. In turn, these organisations are kept informed of young people's issues on LGBTQ+ topics, to help drive contemporary research and influence decision-making.

WHERE OUR RESULTS ARE HEARD

Every week, we share the insights of young people with a range of organisations; who they are and what they do is part of the feedback slides at the start of every lesson and assembly.

You can also find out more about who we work with through our [Impact Report](#), on our [Results pages](#), and via our social media channels (@votesforschools).



WHERE TO FIND US

If you would like to know more about the information outlined above, please contact us:



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