

**THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND**

**STATUTORY TEACHING OF LGBTI+ ISSUES**

**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC PETITION PE1573**

“The Educational Institute of Scotland is committed to the promotion of Equality for all teachers, lecturers and young people in educational establishments and to wider society in Scotland.

The EIS in all aspects of its work seeks to combat any infringement of human rights including discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality and disability wherever they occur”. (EIS Equal Opportunities Statement)

This commitment is evidenced by the existence of a dedicated EIS Equality Committee at national level which addresses a range of Equality matters within Education and wider society. The Institute’s focus on Equality is further demonstrated by the EIS’s growing network of trained Equality Representatives whose role it is to work in schools and colleges supporting members with Equality issues as they impact on the workplace and on the educational experiences of children and young people.

The EIS is committed to the provision of sound education on Equality issues for all children and young people. This is vital to allow them to become responsible citizens and to develop positive, informed attitudes. As part of such education, it is right that homophobic bullying and attitudes are challenged at all levels in light of the fact that LGBTI+ pupils and staff have a right to feel supported and nurtured by the school environment.

However, the EIS also believes that the principles of Curriculum of Excellence are best served by allowing teachers and schools to tailor the provision of Equality education in their establishments to the particular circumstances of the learning context. Staff in schools are best placed to develop and deliver the curriculum in a way which is sensitive and responsive to the specific needs of learners and those of the community in which they learn, and in a way which utilises the specific skills of teachers.

The EIS recognises the importance of consultation with parents in the delivery of the curriculum and recognises that there may be sensitivities around addressing particular areas of curricular content in light of the varying religious and moral beliefs among parents of children and young people attending school. The EIS would highlight the need for appropriate, high quality professional learning opportunities to be made available for teachers who may feel it necessary, in supporting them to address these particular sensitivities.

In general, the EIS believes that it is crucial for practitioners, including those engaging on courses of Initial Teacher Education, to be well equipped and confident to teach their pupils and students about the full breadth of Equality issues in order that they receive a high quality educational

experience, and one which will allow the goals of Curriculum for Excellence as they relate to equality and social justice to be realised. The EIS is of the view that a strengthening of focus on Equality within Initial Teacher Education programmes could be beneficial.

The GTCS Standard for Full Registration, which all fully registered teachers must meet, states clearly that teachers 'show in their day to day practice a commitment to social justice' which includes behaviours shown to 'value and promote fairness and justice and adopt anti-discriminatory practices in all regards, including gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, age, religion, culture and socio-economic background'. Further, the GTCS Code of Professionalism and Conduct states that teachers must treat pupils and colleagues fairly and with respect and without discrimination.

With regard to the continuing professional learning of teachers, the EIS is of the view that practitioners are skilled in identifying their own professional learning needs. The EIS believes that there should be high quality opportunities for staff to engage with further learning in Equalities issues should they identify that as a need. At present, local authority CPD budgets are under significant strain. This, coupled with a lack of supply cover, is causing the EIS real concern that members are not able to access high quality professional learning opportunities to the desired degree. In delivering our training of EIS Equality Representatives, we are finding that teachers are very keen to learn more about this agenda and to take forward the knowledge and skills acquired into the school setting. Much of the evaluation feedback is to the effect that they would like more time than the four training days allocated to develop their expertise.

In conclusion, the EIS, agrees that there is a need for education for children and young people, and for professional learning opportunities for teachers, on all aspects of Equality, including that which is LGBTI+ focused. However, the Institute is not in favour of responding to this need through mandatory or statutory measures for the reasons outlined above.