
Since 2007, LGBT Youth Scotland has undertaken regular surveys with LGBT young people ages 13-25, to ask them about their lives and experiences. The 2017 research was carried out with 684 young people aged 13-25 from across Scotland. This is the largest research of its kind in Scotland and includes new information about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people’s experiences of education, hate crime and mental health.

In terms of bullying and harassment in schools, we found that:

- **Overall, 92% of LGBT young people and 96% of transgender young people experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying during their time in education**
  - They typically mentioned verbal abuse, being subjected to rumours/having others manipulated against them, and being ignored or socially excluded
- **71% of LGBT young people experienced bullying in school on the grounds of being LGBT. Importantly, this has risen from 69% in 2012 and 60% in 2007**
- **82% of transgender young people had experienced bullying in school, which has risen from 77% in 2012**
- **63% of LGBT young people who had experienced bullying said that it had negatively affected their educational attainment**
  - “I don’t always feel safe in class and sometimes I know I zone out and am not listening. I couldn’t concentrate on my work because I was too busy worrying about how to make sure I didn’t come up against bullies.”
- **20% of LGBT young people and 29% of transgender young people who had directly experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying left education.**
  - “I dropped out after repeated bullying, have next to no qualifications, had my health deteriorate.”

- **9% of LGBT young people and 27% of transgender young people left education as a result of homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia in the learning environment.** This highlights the importance of creating safe and LGBT-inclusive schools:
“Teachers in my school were actively transphobic towards an trans boy. He overheard two teachers talking about how ‘freaks’ like him shouldn’t be ‘allowed to mix with normal children.’”

- Only **25%** of LGBT young people were **confident to report homophobia or biphobia at school**. This was higher for those young people studying in college (50%) and university (47%) settings.

Young people who participated in the Life in Scotland were asked what they thought could be done to address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools, their responses referred to the following:

**Curriculum**
- All students should learn about discrimination and the experiences of LGBT people
- This should be part of the general curriculum and not just PSE classes

**Training/ CPD**
- LGBT young people feel that staff should be trained, for example not to make assumptions about a young person’s sexual orientation or gender identity, and to take bullying more seriously

**Safe Spaces**
- Having an LGBT group in their school would contribute to a supportive and safe environment

**Leadership**
“Staff need to call out homophobia and transphobia when they hear it. They need to make it absolutely clear that bigotry and prejudice will not stand in their classrooms. When authority figures stand up and speak out, people take note and it influences others’ decisions.”


For the full report got to: [https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1354/life-in-scotland-for-lgbt-young-people.pdf](https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1354/life-in-scotland-for-lgbt-young-people.pdf)
CURRENT PRACTICE

We are pleased to note that the recommendations noted above are often seen in schools that have completed, or are working towards the LGBT Schools Charter Mark. Typically, the Charter Mark encourages schools to be much more visible in celebrating LGBT identities and in vocalising their expectations that all LGBT learners, parents, staff and visitors are welcome in the school.

There are currently 60 schools in Scotland working towards this award. In the last academic year, we have seen the following awards being given:

- **Bronze Level**
  - Trinity Academy, Edinburgh
  - Craigmount High School, Edinburgh
  - Denny High School, Falkirk
  - Grove Academy, Dundee
  - Nairn Academy, Highland Council
  - Bannerman High School, Glasgow
  - Jedburgh Grammar School, Scottish Borders
  - Berwickshire High School, Scottish Borders

- **Silver level**
  - Brannock High School, North Lanarkshire
  - Downfield Primary School, Dundee
  - Prestwick Academy, South Ayrshire
  - Peebles High School, Scottish Borders
  - Deans Community High School, West Lothian
  - Cumbernauld Academy, North Lanarkshire
  - Leith Academy, Edinburgh
  - Shawlands Academy, Glasgow

- **Gold level**
  - Fettes College, Edinburgh
  - George Heriot’s School, Edinburgh

In terms of addressing bullying, LGBT Charter schools are required to consult with staff and learners on their awareness and experience of bullying in their schools.
They are also required to review their anti-bullying policies, ensuring their policy refers to the Equality Act (2010). Schools who have received their award consistently speak about the positive impact this work has had on both bullying behaviour and in creating safe and inclusive school environments.

We have seen numerous examples of best practice from all of our Charter submissions. Below are two examples:

- **Downfield Primary School, a silver level Charter Mark school**
  The LGBT Champions group – consisting of the deputy head, a class teacher and 9 young people – reviewed the schools anti-bullying policy and added definitions of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia to make clear the schools expectations of respect and inclusion. This was followed up by a number of assemblies which covered LGBT identities and introduced commemorative days like the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) and LGBT History Month.

  Lastly, the P7 class completed work around the SHH! Silence Helps Homophobia film which included a detailed understanding of recognising and responding to homophobic language and what the learners can do if it’s seen in school.

  Owing to these actions, there has been a noticeable decrease in the use of homophobic language in the school and an increase in parental engagement, all of which has been positive.


- **Prestwick Academy, a silver level Charter school**
  Similarly to Downfield, and all Charter Mark schools, Prestwick Academy completed a full review of their anti-bullying and positive behaviour policies to ensure they are LGBT inclusive. The reviews were completed with staff, learners and parents to ensure there was community engagement.

  Prestwick Academy carried out LGBT inclusive anti-bullying work with learners. Through training delivered to over 40% of school staff and briefings on recognising and responding to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, the school have seen a distinct rise in teacher confidence in challenging these behaviours.
This, in part, has led to young people being more confident in challenging their peers’ homophobic, biphobic and transphobic attitudes and behaviours as they are certain they have their teachers’ support.

This work contributes to there being safer and more respectful school environments for all learners; it is important to remember that any learner can experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying, whether they are LGBT or not.

To guide schools and teachers in their approach, LGBT Youth Scotland produced guidance, launched alongside the National Approach to Anti-Bullying ‘Respect for All’ called ‘Addressing Inclusion: Effectively Challenging Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia’. This document was distributed to every school in Scotland in January 2018 and through the LGBT Charter process we have seen the recommendations outlined in both these documents appear in anti-bullying policies across Scotland. Examples of best practice all contain references to the Equality Act (2010), all protected characteristics and describe prejudice-based bullying, including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

Additionally, in November 2017 we launched ‘Supporting Transgender Young People in Education’ which gave clear guidance on responding to and preventing transphobic bullying in schools. This guidance was endorsed by the Children’s Commissioner and 17 local authorities. It has been distributed as widely and is being used in schools across Scotland to improve the educational experience of transgender learners. Both documents were funded by the Scottish Government.

While the clear goal is to ensure that all schools are inclusive and safe for LGBT learners, it is important that until that happens there is provision of safe spaces for LGBT learners. We are currently aware of over 120 secondary schools in Scotland with LGBT groups or Gender and Sexual Orientation Alliances (GSAs). It should be noted that, when contacted, over half the schools were not sure if they had a group and that some schools reacted negatively to the concept of having a GSA in the school. To support schools with their work in this area LGBT Youth Scotland produced a Toolkit for Young People and Teachers.