Diversity Role Models

EMBRACING
difference
ENDING BULLYING

Best Practice Guide
2024

Contents

Introduction

Foreword from our CEO

"I am delighted to introduce our Best Practice Guide, based on our 'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying' project. This guide is the culmination of our comprehensive three-year programme, supported by the Department for Education, aimed at tackling and preventing all forms of bullying in schools across England. Our mission is to foster inclusive learning environments where every young person feels valued and supported. This guide encapsulates our proven strategies and insights, grounded in extensive research and real-world application. We hope it empowers school leaders, governors, and staff to create inclusive communities where all students can thrive and embrace their differences."

- Alex Feis-Bryce, CEO, Diversity Role Models

About us

Our mission is to **end bullying** based on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools and **promote understanding and acceptance** of broader individual differences.

Diversity Role Models is an award-winning registered charity whose vision is **a world where everyone embraces diversity and can thrive**.

Our mission is to **end bullying** based on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools and **promote understanding and acceptance** of broader individual differences. We work collaboratively to create **inclusive learning environments** where young people know they are valued and supported, regardless of their differences.

Our experienced team of educators and volunteer Role Models deliver in-person and online workshops for students in schools and colleges. We have also developed highly regarded training sessions for school staff, governors and parents and carers. Each session is underpinned by **the power of storytelling**, utilising volunteer Role Models who speak openly about their lived experiences of difference and bullying.

Since our formation in 2011, **we have worked directly with 1,000+ schools** in the UK. We have **delivered workshops directly to 200,000+ young people** and **trained 24,000+ school staff members***. In addition to delivering workshops, we develop educational resources for teachers, governors, parents/carers, and communities.

*Data accurate at point of writing (22.05.2024).

Introduction

About the project

The Department for Education selected Diversity Role Models in 2021 to implement our *'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying'* programme over a three year period.

The aim of the programme was to support schools across England to **tackle and prevent all forms of bullying**. Through training interventions, student workshops, Role Model stories and multimedia resources, the programme engaged staff and students to enhance their understanding of diversity, differences, and protected characteristics.

Whole school **research was undertaken** to better understand each school's situation, tailor training and create targeted action plans. The research and evaluation of the impact of the project, published in our *'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying Research & Impact Report 2024'*, informed the creation of this Best Practice Guide.
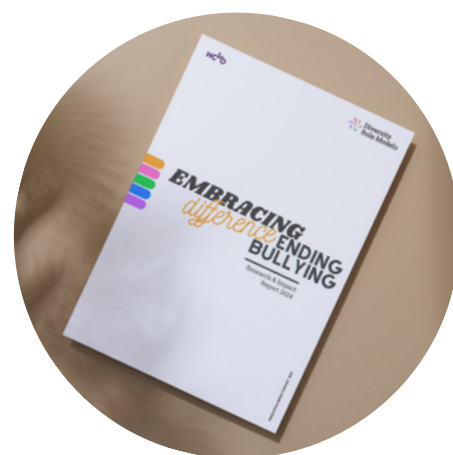
About this guide

This Best Practice Guide has been developed around the *'four pillars to a successful preventative approach'*. This guide aims to inform and advise schools in these four key areas to empower educators to prevent bullying (especially bullying related to the protected characteristics), and to **support schools to create diverse and inclusive communities** where all young people embrace difference and can be themselves and thrive.

The guide is designed for school leaders, governors and school staff and aims to support them in effectively **embedding a preventative whole school approach** to anti-bullying, rooted in best practice and research.
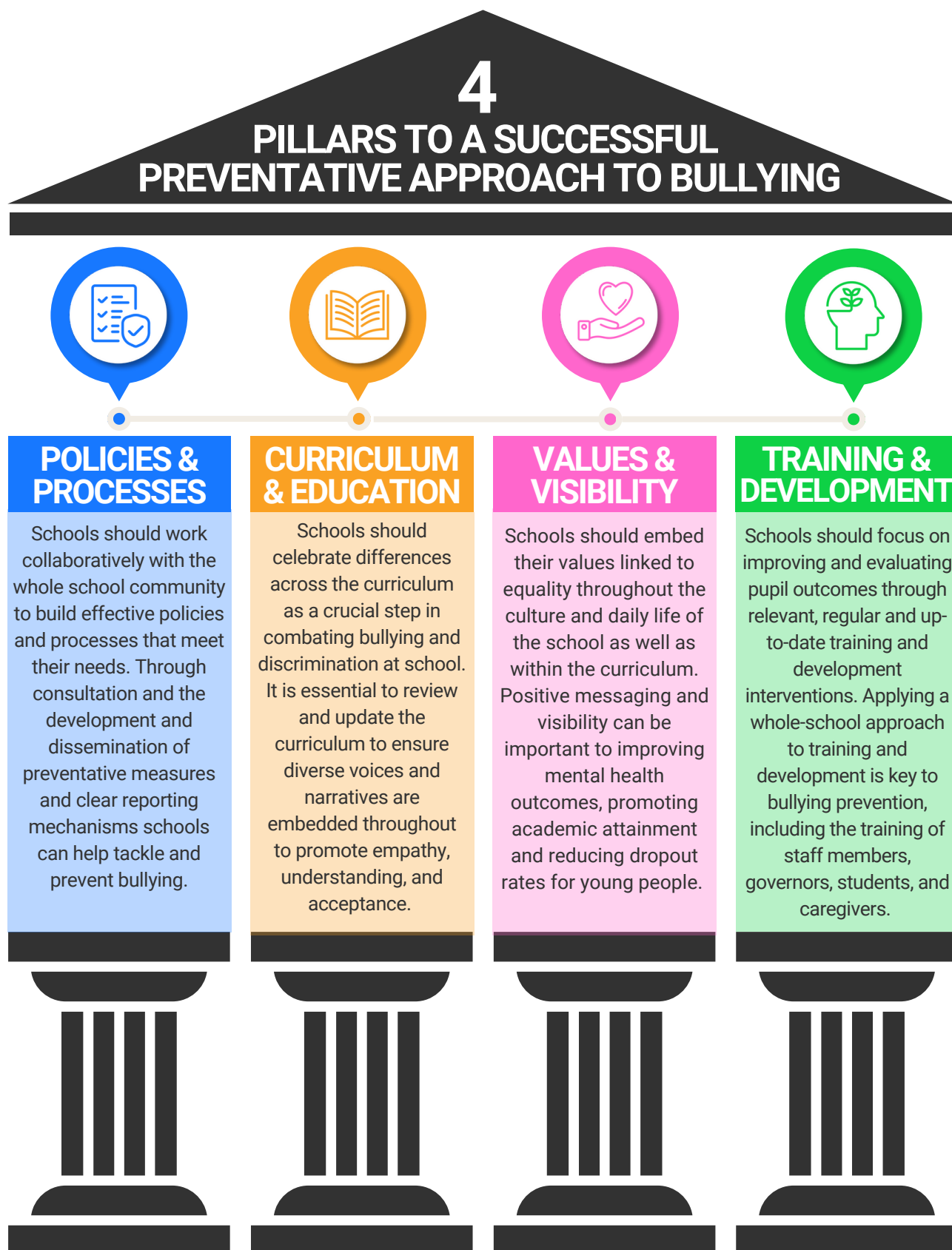
Our Approach

"A school's response to bullying should not start at the point at which a child has been bullied"

- DfE **Preventing and Tackling Bullying**, 2017

Introduction

Our Approach To Preventing Bullying

**4
PILLARS TO A SUCCESSFUL
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH TO BULLYING**

POLICIES & PROCESSES

Schools should work collaboratively with the whole school community to build effective policies and processes that meet their needs. Through consultation and the development and dissemination of preventative measures and clear reporting mechanisms schools can help tackle and prevent bullying.

CURRICULUM & EDUCATION

Schools should celebrate differences across the curriculum as a crucial step in combating bullying and discrimination at school. It is essential to review and update the curriculum to ensure diverse voices and narratives are embedded throughout to promote empathy, understanding, and acceptance.

VALUES & VISIBILITY

Schools should embed their values linked to equality throughout the culture and daily life of the school as well as within the curriculum. Positive messaging and visibility can be important to improving mental health outcomes, promoting academic attainment and reducing dropout rates for young people.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Schools should focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes through relevant, regular and up-to-date training and development interventions. Applying a whole-school approach to training and development is key to bullying prevention, including the training of staff members, governors, students, and caregivers.

Policies & Processes

Why are policies and processes important?

Every school must have measures in place to prevent all forms of bullying. Having effective policies and processes is an essential starting point to effectively tackling and preventing prejudice-based bullying at your school.

All maintained schools have a **legal requirement to have a behaviour policy in place that includes the measures the school is taking to prevent bullying** and these must be communicated to students, staff and parents/carers. For academies and independent schools there must be a strategy in place to prevent bullying.

All schools must **abide by anti-discrimination laws and safeguarding statutory guidance**, with maintained schools and academies being bound by the **Public Sector Equality Duties to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation**, advance **equality of opportunity** and **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

What the Department for Education says

> *Successful schools have policies in place to deal with bullying and poor behaviour which are clear to parents, pupils and staff so that, when incidents do occur, they are dealt with quickly.*
>
> *- Department for Education,*
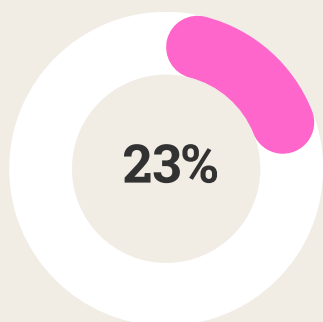> *__Preventing and tackling bullying, 2017__*

Policies & Processes

The research and data

**What the *'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying'* Report found...**

1 in 3 secondary students did not feel that staff consistently helped when someone was being bullied.

23%

of secondary students said they didn't, or weren't sure they knew, how to report bullying at school.

Just Like Us found only **33%** of LGBTQ+ young people say there is a clear process for reporting anti-LGBTQ+ bullying
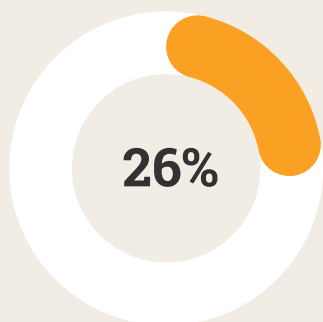
26%

of parents/carers were not aware of the school's anti-bullying and behaviour policies.
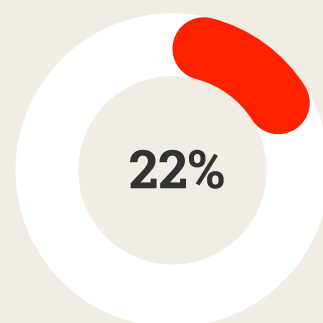
22%

of secondary and 20% of primary students said teachers didn't inform them/ they weren't sure if teachers regularly informed them about their school's anti-bullying rules.
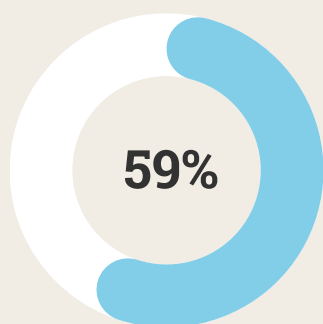
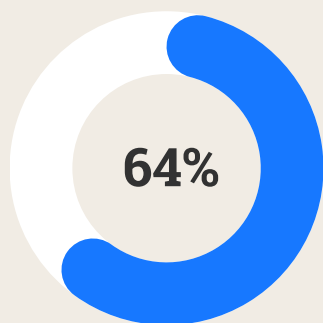# Policies & Processes

The research and data

WHAT THE *'EMBRACING DIFFERENCE, ENDING BULLYING'* REPORT ALSO FOUND...
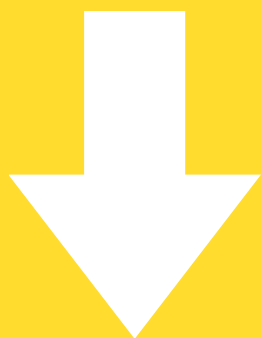
Staff (especially SLT), governors and parents/carers **were less likely to report that bullying was common at their school than students.** With students from marginalised identities consistently reporting higher levels of bullying.

59% of primary students thought their classmates understood their words could hurt others.

64% of secondary students thought their classmates understood their words could hurt others.

Policies & Processes

Best Practice for Policies and Processes

CONSULTING AND COLLABORATING

Given the fact that there is a significant discrepancy between the views of staff, especially SLT, and that of students, we always suggest **consulting with your whole school community including students, staff, governors and parents/carers** to get a more holistic understanding of the challenges your community may be facing. These consultations can take the form of **surveys, focus groups, drop-in session, lessons or consultations with student-led anti-bullying or equality groups** and will provide invaluable insight for you that can help shape an action plan. They can also help create a dialogue around your schools' efforts.

We found that students from marginalised identities were much more likely to agree that targeted bullying takes place at their school related to their identity. For example, girls were 81% more likely to agree that bullying takes place related to gender than boys. Therefore, we'd recommend schools **make space for students from marginalised backgrounds to share their experiences with staff** to help shape your action plan and anti-bullying strategy. The following resources could help you with engaging student voice through student councils and **pupil voice, student-led equality groups** or **anti-bullying ambassadors.**

It's important to **share the outcomes of any changes made** and the action plans with all stakeholders to **build a shared vision the whole school community is committed to in preventing and tackling prejudice-based bullying.**

Policies & Processes

Best Practice for Policies and Processes

WRITING EFFECTIVE POLICIES

It can be daunting to review policies, but through **engaging with your whole school community** on these changes you can bring everyone on board. There are a wide range of resources available from the **Anti-Bullying Alliance** and **Equaliteach** on writing effective policies to support a whole school approach. While it's vital that your behaviour policy includes references to the school's efforts to prevent bullying it can be useful to **have a separate anti-bullying policy.**

However, these policies cannot sit in isolation and should all be rooted in your values. Bullying can proliferate in schools in which poor behaviour (that may not constitute bullying) goes unchecked. Therefore, a school's behaviour and anti-bullying **policies need to reinforce each other.** Curriculum and learning is a vital tool in effectively preventing bullying and policies relating to Relationships, Sex and Health Education should provide opportunities to explore bullying and celebrate differences.

There are some **fantastic principles set out by the Anti-Bullying Alliance** that can support you in creating a policy that is relevant to your school community and meets the needs of your students that you identified through consultations. Your policy should have a **clear definition of bullying** and make clear references to **specific types of bullying (including cyberbullying and prejudice-based bullying)**. You should **provide examples of what different forms of prejudice-based bullying such as racism or transphobia could look like**. **Research from the USA** has suggested that reference to the specific protections afforded to, for example LGBTQ+ young people, made policies more effective at preventing and tackling bullying.

Policies should lay out **clear reporting routes and we'd advise having a wide range of ways someone can report bullying**, including anonymous routes such as worry boxes or online systems. It should make clear how we can all work to **tackle and prevent bullying through being upstanders not bystanders.** You should also ensure that all **policies are effectively communicated to all stakeholders** such as staff (including non-teaching), pupils (consider **child-friendly versions** of policies) and parents/carers (including translated versions for any members of the community who may require them).

Policies & Processes

Best Practice for Policies and Processes

BUILDING EFFECTIVE PROCESSES AND REVIEWS OF DATA

Throughout the '*Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying*' project we tailored specific action plans based on the data collected through consulting with members of the school community. The action plan noted priority areas for the school and the school assigned lead members of staff to be responsible for different areas. **Schools could link these action plans to existing School Improvement Plans or to their Public Sector Equality Objectives.** The evaluation of the project highlighted the utility of this data driven approach.

To build effective processes, it's important that **everyone knows what their responsibility is in relation to bullying and that they are empowered to take action to tackle and prevent it.** You could consider **establishing a working group that is tasked with creating an action plan** with staff members, representatives of the student body, parents/carers and a link governor assigned to oversee this work. There are a range of approaches detailed below that are worth considering and discussing with your community, but whichever approach you deem appropriate, it's important that everyone in school knows how the processes operate and what they must do to support your approach.

Schools can **utilise different systems such as CPOMS for logging and recording incidents** of bullying or behaviour incidents related to prejudice such as the use of prejudice language. This allows schools to **regularly review data and target interventions** at particular age groups or classes as necessary.

Policies & Processes

Best Practice for Policies and Processes

PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS

Many schools have found **success in consistently applying restorative justice approaches to behaviour and bullying.** These have been defined as *'a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future'*.[1]

Research published with the **Department for Education** has shown that: 'rates of success in stopping bullying were highest in schools with consistently restorative approaches (79 per cent) and lower in schools that were inconsistently restorative (64 per cent) or not restorative at all (58 per cent)'

> *Rates of success in stopping bullying were highest in schools with consistently restorative approaches (79%) and lower in schools that were inconsistently restorative (64%) or not restorative at all (58%).*
>
> Department of Education, *The use and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies in schools*, 2010

Research from the Early Intervention Foundation has found **positive outcomes and impacts of the implementation of preventative strategies in schools, seeing a reduction in the rates of bullying.**

Research has suggested that **prevention methods such as bystander training** or programmes that aim to **build empathy and develop social and emotional skills can have a positive impact** in schools. Likewise, interventions such as peer support programmes or student-led equality programmes have also been effective in many areas.

It's important to consider what initiative and processes would be effective at your school and get support in delivering them. Organisations such as **The Diana Awards** have programmes focused on peer support, **Stonewall have guides** on student led equality groups and **Diversity Role Models** and the **Anne Frank Trust** offer workshops focused on empathy building and being an upstander.
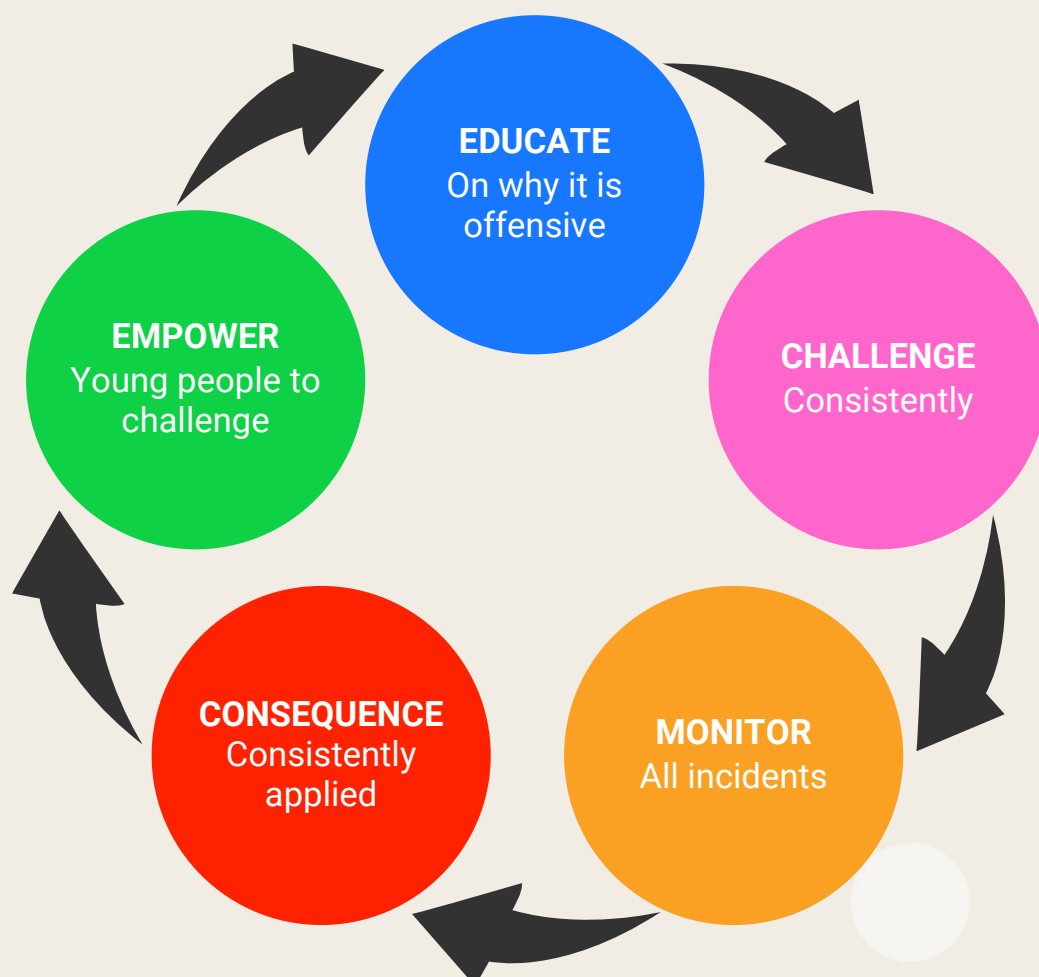
[1] Marshall, T. F. (1996). The evolution of restorative justice in Britain. European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 4(4), 21-43.

Policies & Processes

Best Practice for Policies and Processes

PROCESS FOR PREVENTING AND TACKLING PREJUDICE LANGUAGE

At Diversity Role Models we've developed a simple cycle for effectively tackling and preventing the use of prejudice language. How you manage the use of language should be detailed in your behaviour policy, but evidence suggests that restorative approaches can be effective in this area and you can **find out more about these from the Anti-Bullying Alliance.**

EDUCATE
On why it is offensive

CHALLENGE
Consistently

MONITOR
All incidents

CONSEQUENCE
Consistently applied

EMPOWER
Young people to challenge

Policies & Processes

Best Practice for Policies and Processes

PROCESS FOR PREVENTING AND TACKLING PREJUDICE LANGUAGE

1. **Educate**
Educate young people across the curriculum, in PSHE/ RSHE/ Citizenship lessons and beyond, about the impact of prejudice language. **Utilise free resources** such as our **Upstander Animation Series** or our **Role Model Stories** about the impact that prejudice language can have. We'd recommend **Anna** or **Louise's** for primary and **Keith's** story for secondary.

2. **Challenge**
Ensure all staff are trained and confident to **challenge any use of prejudice language and that this is consistently applied by all members of school staff**, teaching and non-teaching. Staff should use questions and discuss the impact of language when challenging not just asking the student to not use the language without explanation. You could ask *'What do you mean by using that word?'*

3. **Monitor**
Use CPOMS or other systems to **log all incidents of prejudice language and monitor and review all data** to find trends and target additional educational or preventative interventions as needed.

4. **Consequence**
Follow your behaviour policy and **apply the consequences for the use of prejudice language** such as restorative justice approaches and ensure this is consistently applied. Our **Role Model Stories** can be used for reflection on the impact of language for those who have used it.

5. **Empower**
Through student workshops and prevention initiative such upstander training or peer mentors, **empower young people to challenge and tackle prejudiced language themselves** and be upstanders rather than bystanders to prejudice language.

Curriculum and Education

Why is a diverse curriculum important?

Our research over the last three years as part of our Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying project (as well as notable research in our **Pathway to Inclusion report** and **external research** from Just Like Us) has emphasised the importance of a diverse curriculum in tackling and preventing bullying in schools.

Analysis of data collected indicates that an increased emphasis on teaching about diverse identities in schools is associated with a decrease in bullying based on protected characteristics.

Our findings strongly advocate for educational policies that prioritise diversity education as a crucial step in combating bullying and discrimination at school. By incorporating diverse voices and narratives into the curriculum, schools can help promote empathy, understanding, and acceptance among students, ultimately reducing incidents of bullying related to protected characteristics and encouraging young people to be upstanders, rather than bystanders, to bullying.

What the Department for Education says

> *Successful schools openly discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related difference.*
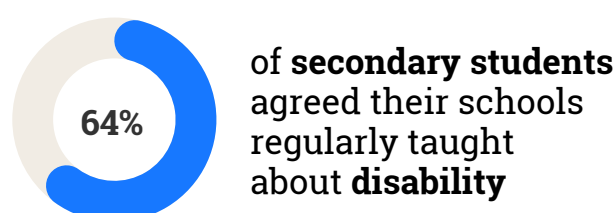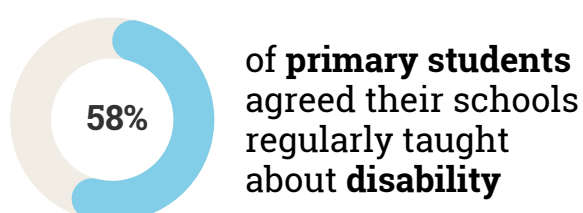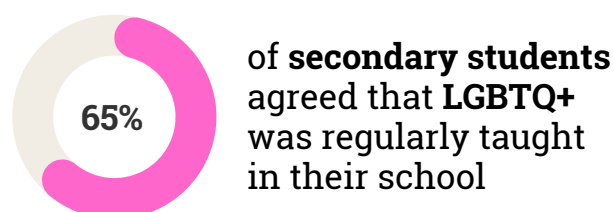>
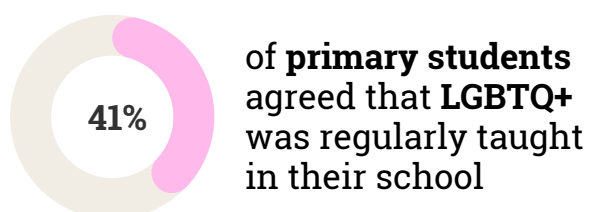> *- Department for Education,*
> *Preventing and tackling bullying, 2017*

Curriculum and Education

The research and data

WHAT THE 'EMBRACING DIFFERENCE, ENDING BULLYING' REPORT FOUND...

41% of **primary students** agreed that **LGBTQ+** was regularly taught in their school

65% of **secondary students** agreed that **LGBTQ+** was regularly taught in their school

58% of **primary students** agreed their schools regularly taught about **disability**

64% of **secondary students** agreed their schools regularly taught about **disability**

Additionally, with the exception of gender, **students were notably less likely to report being taught about a particular marginalised identity if they themself shared that identity.**

For example; **54% of students who identified as having a disability said that disability was regularly taught about, compared to 67% of students who identified as not having a disability**. This difference may suggest that those not from a particular marginalised identity may not notice whether something is not being taught to the same degree.

Areas for development

Across our three years of research, we found that **staff identified LGBTQ+ topics as the least taught protected characteristics** (sexual orientation and gender reassignment). **Students consistently identified disability and LGBTQ+ as the areas which were least covered by the school curriculum.** Whilst our research indicated that these two areas are the least taught in schools, **it is important that all protected characteristics are represented and taught about within the curriculum** to foster good relations across the protected characteristics and to prepare young people for the diverse world in which we live.

Curriculum and Education

Areas for development

We found notable gaps between what staff and SLT suggest is taught, and the perceptions of students themselves. These disparities suggest there was a wide gap between the views of staff and students, an area where further exploration and communication is needed.

Our research also highlighted the **importance of educating students in relation to the schools' policies and processes linked to bullying, equality, diversity and inclusion** (see Policies and Processes section further information).

Barriers to delivering improvement

Feedback from stakeholders across this project highlighted possible barriers in delivering an inclusive curriculum and educating young people on bullying and the differences that may motivate bullying:

● **Staff highlighted a lack of confidence in addressing diversity and an uncertainty of how to embed diversity in their subject area.**

This further highlights the importance of training and development for staff in this area, with **feedback from staff wanting more training and support to effectively address diversity and inclusion** in the curriculum (see Training and Development section for further information).

● **Many staff referenced a lack of time within the curriculum to effectively deliver a diverse curriculum.**

The current primary curriculum was described by one teacher as *"bulging"* with *"competing priorities"* and **carving out time to focus on diversity and inclusion seen as challenging**. The use of **'usualising' within the curriculum can allow schools to create a sound basis of a diverse curriculum** without the need for dedicated curriculum time.

Curriculum and Education

Best Practice for Curriculum and Education

'USUALISING': Making the presence of diverse people part of daily school life [2]

Best practice for creating a diverse curriculum starts with 'usualising' the presence of people with diverse identities.

When you *usualise*, you familiarise students to the presence of diverse identities in society (such as people with disabilities, different races, different religions, diverse families, LGBTQ+ people etc.) and take away the threat of difference which can create fear and motivate bullying.

The point of *usualising* is the 'non-comment', and the 'non-judgement'. **Making these identities part of everyday learning is inclusion through reference**, rather than in-depth study or learning of the subject. **When diverse identities are *usualised* frequently, this can embed acceptance and empathy in the learner.**

***Usualisng* can be done at any age-phase and in any subject.** As mentioned in the **[Schools Out recommendations](#)**, it is important to review the curriculum to ensure our differences are openly discussed and represented across all subject areas. It is also **important to *usualise* beyond the classroom** to create a school environment that reflects the diverse world in which we live (see best practice in Values & Visibility section).

[2] Schools Out, LGBT+ History Month Resources for Educators

Curriculum and Education

Best Practice for Curriculum and Education

IDEAS FOR USUALISING

1. **Read Inclusive Books**
Choose class texts to study that usualise different identities through the characters and/or the author, such as:

Lit In Colour – featuring books from writers of colour for all ages.
Scope – a list of Scope books featuring children with disabilities.
Stonewall – a list of LGBTQ+ inclusive books for all age phases

2. **Create Inclusive Displays**
Create inclusive displays throughout school that usualise different identities.

3. **Use Diverse Imagery**
Use diverse imagery in PowerPoints and in learning materials.

4. **Feature Diverse Identities**
Feature diverse identities in word problems and questions, such as:

Maths (Primary): Maya and her wife Jane spend £8.99 at the shop.
They pay with a £10 note. How much change do they get?
Maths (Secondary): Sana surveys her year group in school.
Out of 200 students, she learns that 8 of them are non-binary. Write the number of non-binary students as a percentage.

5. **Discuss Equality and Human Rights**
Use diverse examples in discussions, debates, circle-time etc. such as when discussing rights and freedoms as part of British Values/SMSC.

6. **Use Diverse Role Models**
Present students with different identities and stories that challenge stereotypes and provide representation of different identities, such as:

Little People Big Dreams (Primary) – a series of biographies and lesson plans introducing students to a diverse range of people from all walks of life.
100 Black Britons (Primary and Secondary) – a celebration of Black History featuring a comprehensive list of Black Britons who contributed to shape Great Britain by their words and actions.
Diversity Role Models: Role Model Stories (Primary and Secondary) – a series of videos featuring lived experiences from a diverse range of people and covering a range of topics.

Curriculum and Education

Best Practice for Curriculum and Education

'ACTUALISING': Deeper dives into diverse identities and prejudice they face [3]

Actualising **is the natural successor to** *usualising*. Once diverse identities are part of everyday learning for students (*usualising*), they are then ready to study these topics in more depth and without distraction.

> Actualising diverse identities is to make them real in the mind of the learner; to explain, to examine, and to make concrete a subject so that the learner can put it into a real-life context.

Usualising **and** *actualising* **of the protected characteristics should be visible throughout the whole school**. This should include in-depth discussions where differences are *actualised*, and **regular representation of diversity is** *usualised* **in the daily life of the school.** Assemblies, displays, curriculum time, homework tasks, literature, circle time, tutor time and extra-curricular activities should be used to **embed inclusion and celebrate difference.**

Usualising and *actualising* also brings representation of different identities into the classroom and beyond. **For a student, seeing their own identity represented in the classroom can be an empowering experience.** It can create a sense of belonging and validation, as well as creating an environment where that young person feels **valued and safe to be themselves** and in turn can thrive. It is also important to consider intersectional representations, for example people who are black and LGBTQ+ such as Justin Fashanu or Audre Lorde.

[3] Schools Out, LGBT+ History Month Resources for Educators

Curriculum and Education

Best Practice for Curriculum and Education

EXAMPLES OF USUALISING AND ACTUALISING

Primary Education

USUALISING	*ACTUALISING*
PE: Mentioning how the game you are playing could be adapted for people with disabilities.	**PE:** Look at barriers to participation in sport and play an adapted game, for example sitting volleyball.
PSHE: While discussing wedding ceremonies include an image of a same-sex marriage.	**PSHE/Literacy/Citizenship:** Read *'Uncle Bobby's Wedding'* and discuss the law around same-sex marriage, legal rights for LGBTQ+ people and how they were won.
Literacy: Sharing stories with diverse characters , for example *'Sulwe'* by Lupita Nyong'o.	**PSHE/Literacy/Citizenship:** Facilitate an in-depth discussion about differences and ask questions about why Sulwe felt different and why she tried to change.

Curriculum and Education

Best Practice for Curriculum and Education

EXAMPLES OF USUALISING AND ACTUALISING

Secondary Education

USUALISING	*ACTUALISING*
Art and Design: Show multiple representations of art from racially diverse artists.	**Art and Design:** Study the concept of identity in art and explore how race/class/gender and other identities impacted artists such as Aubrey Williams, Frida Kahlo etc.
English: Reference authors identities in passing to highlight the diversity of authors you are studying.	**English:** Discuss in-depth the portrayal of characters and what this tells us about prejudice and discrimination, for example gender in *'Wuthering Heights'* or race in *'To Kill a Mockingbird'*.
Geography: Reference social/political push and pull factors in migration/ urbanisation related to LGBTQ+ individuals.	**Geography:** Look in detail at case studies of LGBTQ+ migrants and legal rights across the world, the role of colonialism in shaping anti-gay laws and how laws change over time. Study urbanisation and how it has impacted LGBTQ+ rights.

> *A maths teacher once used an example of a same sex couple and I knew from then on I had at least one person at school I could talk to.*
>
> Student Voice Group member

Curriculum and Education

Best Practice for Curriculum and Education

EDUCATE PUPILS ON SCHOOL POLICY

It is important to **educate students on school policies and processes linked to bulling, equality, diversity and inclusion.**

Best practice ensures that students are supported to **understand the impact of prejudice language and bullying** and the importance of being an *upstander* not a *bystander*.

Only **65%** of secondary students stated they would challenge someone or report them to a teacher if they overheard them bullying another student.*

* This is, clearly, an area where significant improvement is needed in schools.

It is essential that schools build students confidence in reporting and responding to incidents of bullying, discrimination, and prejudice language. **Best practice involves the allocation of time in the academic year to educate, remind, and seek student input on equality, diversity, inclusion, bullying and prejudice language.** See section on Policies & Processes for more information on this area.

> *Strong people stand up for themselves but the strongest stand up for others.*
>
> Student evaluation comment following a Diversity Role Models *'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying'* Workshop

Some useful resources:

Diversity Role Models Upstander Animation Series (Primary)
Diversity Role Models Resource (Secondary) – The Impact of Bullying
To enquire about booking our pupil workshops **visit our webpage.**

Curriculum and Education

Best Practice for Curriculum and Education

ROLE MODEL STORIES

Use diverse role model stories to embed inclusion and build empathy.

> *The classroom is the perfect place to show children that people from all backgrounds deserve to tell and star in the stories our society values and celebrates.*
>
> – Jason Arthur, Teach First Trustee

Best practice is crafting a curriculum and **providing an education that incorporates representation of role models and stories** that are diverse and challenge stereotypes.

Studies have shown the **links between storytelling and increased cooperative behaviour** through the release of oxytocin, a chemical **key to developing empathy**. A leading theory as to why storytelling is so powerful relates to what is called *mirror neurons.* Mirror neurons are thought to be triggered inside our brains when we hear stories and the lived experiences of others. Many scientists believe that mirror neurons may help create the experience of empathy.

Studies in the 1960s demonstrated that having positive black role models in children's literature was effective at challenging racist attitudes, stereotypes and assumptions amongst white children. Litcher and Johnson, 1969.

Curriculum and Education

Best Practice for Curriculum and Education

ROLE MODEL STORIES

A key feature of our trainings and student workshops is the **sharing of a personal story from a volunteer Role Model**, whose identity is linked to one or more of the protected characteristics. NCVO's independent evaluation of our workshops and trainings showed that stakeholders found the **Role Model stories were impactful and compelling**. Evaluation respondents reported that it helped to increase empathy, raise awareness, and challenged misconceptions. We found that Role Model stories **resonated deeply with stakeholders, serving as a powerful instrument in deepening understanding of difference** and the impact of bullying, fostering empathy and challenging stereotypes.

Through focus groups conducted by NCVO, we also found that **students were able to recall the Role Model story they had heard even months after receiving one of our workshops,** showing a lasting impact.

[Research](#) has shown that we are **22 times more likely to remember a story than a plain fact**, further highlighting the long-term effect these stories can have in creating an inclusive school environment.

Role model stories can be sourced from a range of sources, such as guest speakers, staff, parents/carers, outside agencies, video resources and literature. They can feature people from all walks of life, such as people from the school community, historical figures, celebrities, sporting figures, leaders in their field, and many other areas.

You can access our fantastic Role Model video resources [here](#).

All Role Model stories feature an accompanying resource pack with questions and classroom activities.

Values and Visibility

Why are values and visibility important?

Understanding their identity is an important part of a child's development. It takes place in the early years of their lives and follows them into adulthood. Equality, diversity, and inclusion, RSHE, SMSC and PSHE have a place in establishing what this will look like.

The classroom is the perfect place to boost visibility and show children that people from all backgrounds deserve to tell and star in the stories our society values and celebrates.

Positive visibility and representation allow students with marginalised identities to feel included. But it also educates others about differences and can help reduce the frequency of bullying.

What Ofsted say:

Research and inspection evidence indicate (that the following) contribute most strongly to pupils' personal development: Schools promotes equality of opportunity so that all pupils can thrive together, understanding that difference is a positive, not a negative, and that individual characteristics make people unique. This includes, but is not limited to, pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics and how equality and diversity are promoted.
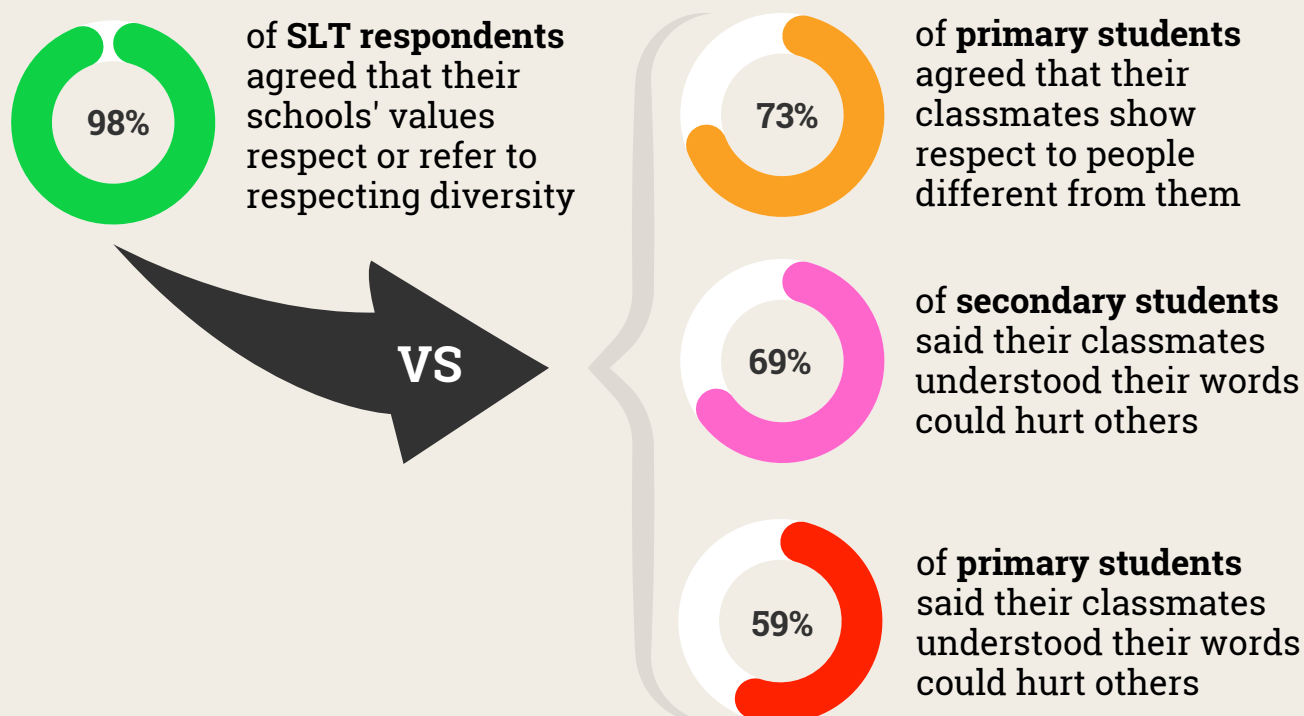
- Ofsted, School Inspection Handbook, 2024

Values and Visibility

The research and data

WHAT THE 'EMBRACING DIFFERENCE, ENDING BULLYING' REPORT FOUND...

The *'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying'* project found that **SLT respondents almost unanimously agreed that their schools' values highlight respect or refer to respecting diversity** and that they make reasonable adjustments for those with protected characteristics to help manage their education. Yet, **when we consider these values in action, students were only weakly positive.**

98% of **SLT respondents** agreed that their schools' values respect or refer to respecting diversity

VS

73% of **primary students** agreed that their classmates show respect to people different from them

69% of **secondary students** said their classmates understood their words could hurt others

59% of **primary students** said their classmates understood their words could hurt others

> *Although they do cover all topics in PSHE and assemblies, it's very common that they barely ever look into disability, gender equality, or queer identity.*
>
> Secondary student comment from the *Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying* programme survey

Values and Visibility

The research and data

WHAT PREVIOUS RESEARCH HAS FOUND

[In a pivotal study](#) from 1951, researchers looked at how living in segregated or desegregated housing units related to prejudice and found that, in New York (where housing was desegregated), white study participants reported lower prejudice than white participants in Newark (where housing was still segregated). This is referred to as **the contact hypothesis, the idea that contact can reduce prejudice against members of a variety of marginalised groups.**

Other studies found that contact was able to reduce prejudice based on sexual orientation and prejudice against people with disabilities. The researchers also found that **contact with members of one group not only reduced prejudice towards that particular group, but reduced prejudice towards members of other groups as well**.

[Just Like Us research](#) found that a considerable portion of **LGBTQ+ youth encountered negative language and bullying on a daily basis, alongside limited positive messaging about LGBTQ+ issues.** Similarly, data from our project shows that there is a strong sense that **many schools need to do more to build diverse curricula to build inclusivity and representation**.

Visibility and positive messaging are crucial to young people's experiences because they are linked to improved mental health outcomes, higher academic attainment and lower dropout rates.
Just Like Us, Growing Up LGBT Report, 2021

WHAT THIS TELLS US…

Schools should not only visibly celebrate diversity during key points in a year such as Black History Month, Lunar New Year or Pride Month, but rather **embed diversity throughout the school year and the curriculum.** Each school's values should be openly communicated to the whole community through websites, newsletters, assemblies and policies and should underpin their ongoing and committed to the celebration of difference.

There is more work to be done in schools to ensure school values underpin all areas of school life and the curriculum to close the gap between leadership teams' perceptions and students' lived experiences.

Values and Visibility

Best Practice for Values and Visibility

CELEBRATING DIFFERENT FAMILIES AND IDENTITIES IN SCHOOL

Our project found that pupils with a marginalised identity were less likely to say that their school taught about the group they belonged to, while pupils who didn't share that identity or family difference were more likely to say they learned about such identities.

Diversity Role Models recommends:

- **Consulting students through student voice groups, questionnaires or other means,** to better understand pupil experiences and to know which identities are underrepresented in school life and in the curriculum.

- **Embedding school values referencing equality through actionable items,** such as creating inclusive posters and displays with diverse role models.

- **Being inclusive in language and examples,** such as by using gender-neutral language or challenging stereotypes in examples.

- **Ensuring representation of different groups** in books, videos, games and presentations.

- **Updating RSHE materials to ensure they are inclusive of all,** for example including references to same-sex relationships.

Values and Visibility

Best Practice for Values and Visibility

CELEBRATING DIFFERENT FAMILIES AND IDENTITIES IN SCHOOL

Teachers can **use examples of different families or people who defy stereotypes** in classroom activities.

Schools should also **conduct a library audit** to gauge what kind of experiences may be under- or overrepresented, and to **include stories or perspectives from people currently lacking visibility**.

We have a range of resources available to support schools with celebrating different identities, including through our multimedia **Role Model Stories videos** which come with dedicated Teacher Packs.

Staff can also access The Upstander Animation Series for primary pupils, called **Pause, Rethink, Rewind, Be Kind**.

If school staff feel comfortable doing so, Diversity Role Models encourages them to **be visible in their own identity or allyship**, such as through wearing badges, lanyards, or having stickers on their classroom doors.

Training and Development

Why is training and development important?

Examining the stark findings of levels of bullying in English schools combined with the positive evaluation and lasting outcomes of our *Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying* programme, **there is a clear need for training and development in schools**.

Although the DfE and Ofsted do not outline statutory requirements on the content, duration or delivery method of CPD programmes in schools, the '*DfE Standard for teachers' professional development', July 2016*, notes that **training should have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes and include collaboration and expert challenge.** The DfE also recommends that **professional development is most effective when activities form part of a sustained programme.**

This collaborative and sustained programme can be achieved through Diversity Role Models anti-bullying training workshops, resources, and interventions.

What the Department for Education says

> *A professional development programme is likely to involve many activities designed to sustain and embed practice, including, but not limited to: individual and collaborative teacher activity; well-designed formative assessment and evaluation; whole-school leadership; and expert input.*
>
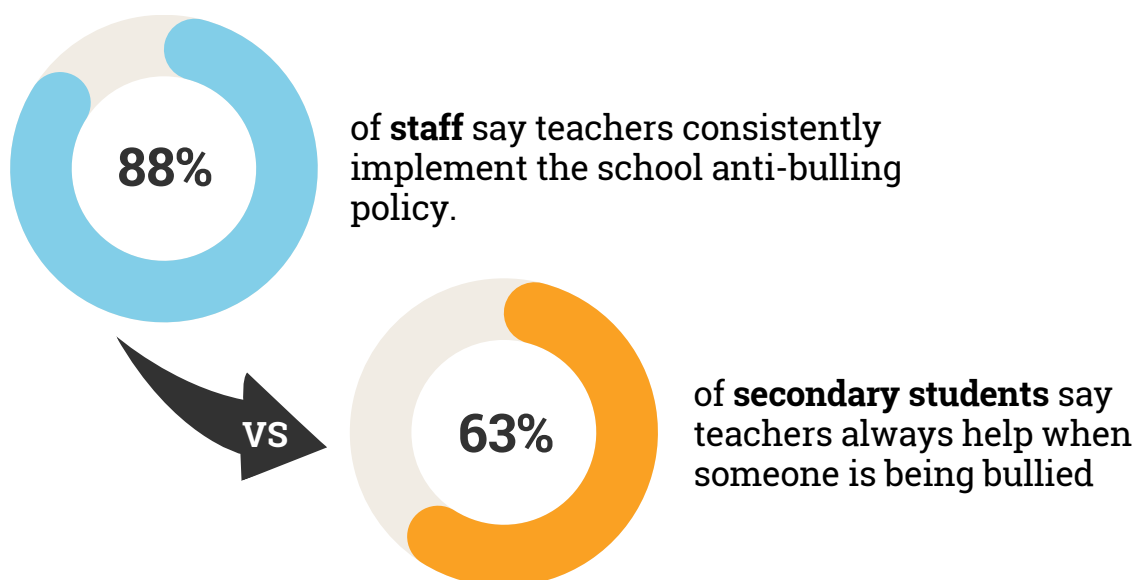> *DfE Standard for teachers' professional development*
> *July 2016*

Training and Development

The research and data

What the 'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying' Report found...

88% of **staff** say teachers consistently implement the school anti-bulling policy.

vs

63% of **secondary students** say teachers always help when someone is being bullied

This discrepancy could be the result of **staff being unable to recognise certain signs of bullying, stereotyping or bias**, the lack of confidence in responding to incidents or having challenging conversations.

Schools can address this through training interventions, targeting governors and staff in particular, to **enhance their understanding of diversity and differences, the protected characteristics and legal obligations**, and the schools' own anti-bullying policies and processes.

The impacts of staff training and development are manifold. Evaluation surveys with **809 staff who attended our '***Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying***' training showed a significant immediate improvement for school-wide outcomes.**

88% increased their understanding of how to tackle and prevent bullying at their school

89% felt more confident to make changes that will ensure their school is more inclusive.

Training and Development

The research and data

What the 'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying' Report found...

Overall, **staff felt a strong sense of empowerment and motivation,** reflecting a collective commitment to implementing tangible, positive changes within their schools.

We evaluated whether our training had a positive impact in the long-term through post-training surveys completed between **1-7 months after delivery**, and found that **staff felt even more positively**.

The training not only galvanised staff to revisit and review their anti-bullying policies and procedures while equipping them with new tools, resources and confidence to implement them consistently. It also **inspired staff to refresh classroom activities,** carry out school audits, allocate more time for discussions and questions related to protected characteristics, and establish a 'diversity library'.
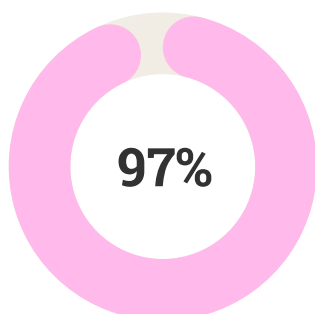
Out of those staff reflecting on long-term impacts:
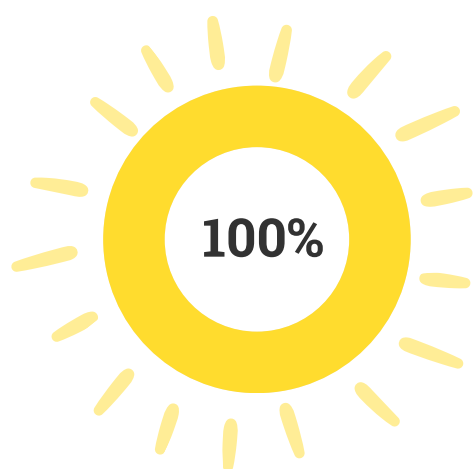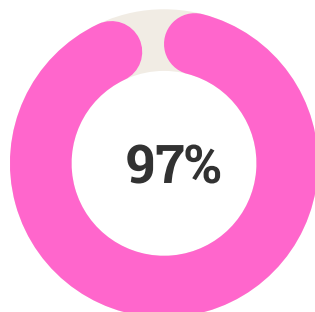
100% said they had a better understanding of diversity and difference.

97% said they had a better understanding of how to tackle and prevent bullying.

97% felt more confident to make changes to ensure their school is more inclusive.

Training and Development

Areas for development

Based on our Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying project findings, some staff in English schools struggle to see how diversity could apply to their subject or **feel bound by exam board specifications, which they feel limits their ability to embed diversity**. This can have a detrimental effect on young people who do not see their experiences reflected in school life in a positive light.

Benefits of training and development

- Providing relevant and regular training ensures **school staff have the knowledge and tools on how to embed inclusion and diversity effectively into the school curriculum** and life (more on this in Section on Curriculum and Education).

- Workshops that aim to build students' skills and confidence in responding to bullying can have wide reaching positive impacts too. For example, immediately after the workshops delivered in the *Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying* programme, **primary students pledged to not assume things about people, to be upstanders, to fight against stereotypes, to treat others with kindness and to always tell a teacher or adult if they saw someone being bullied.**

- **Applying a whole-school approach** to training and development is the most effective way to prevent and tackle incidents of bullying because it **builds a common understanding among the different school stakeholders**. It also develops trust in the school's anti-bullying commitments and processes, and **encourages everyone to work together to embed the celebration of difference into school life**.

Training and Development

Best Practice for Training and Development

USE A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

The entire school community, including all teachers, support staff, office staff and lunchtime supervisors, as well as students, caregivers, and governors **should be trained in how they can take action to prevent bullying and uphold the shared values of respecting difference**. We recommend such training to be held regularly and include case studies or scenarios that are relevant to each school and stakeholder group.

The survey respondents in the 'Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying' project felt the use of **real-life examples and scenarios helped to contextualise the training content.**

Care should be taken to **include examples and considerations of people with intersectional identities,** such as people of faith who are LGBTQ+ or people with disabilities or neurodivergence who are black. The training should also allow time for questions, worries or concerns.

> *We are planning a whole school community project based on today's training. We will focus on ensuring that all of our anti-bullying work which has been undertaken previously is revisited and shared with parents and carers. There will be a renewed focus on identifying and using diverse role models for children which link to the curriculum and ensure that protected characteristics are on display throughout school, ensuring everyone is confident teaching and discussing them.*
>
> Staff evaluation form comment from the *Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying* programme

Training and Development

Best Practice for Training and Development

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When planning training and development, schools should consider **availability of stakeholders** to accommodate competing schedules and commitments, including those of caregivers. Where possible, schools should **organise various training modalities, such as virtual and/or hybrid sessions,** if those are deemed more effective with caregivers or other school stakeholders.

Our project survey results indicated an overall preference for longer and in-person training sessions, especially for school staff. An overall preference was 2-hour sessions over 1-hour or 1.5-hour sessions for staff.

To help schools identify the needs and challenges of each stakeholder group, such as areas in which they might lack confidence or knowledge, **schools can convene steering groups, distribute online surveys, or collect feedback in a different way.**

Feedback can be used to guide or inform some of the content and delivery of training and development, including when communicating those needs to external training providers, such as Diversity Role Models. For more details on consulting school stakeholders, please refer to the 'Best Practice for Policies and Processes' section.

Diversity Role Models staff training was **tailored to each individual school while also being rooted in best practice**. The training is built around the 'four pillars to a successful preventative approach': *Policies & Processes, Curriculum & Education, Values & Visibility, and Training & Development,* in addition to **signposting to additional teaching and educational resources**.

The breath and diversity of Diversity Role Models training allowed staff to consider a range of ways **difference can be embedded throughout all areas of school life,** equipping all stakeholders with the tools and information relevant to their respective roles.

Training and Development

Best Practice for Training and Development

BUILDING ON INCLUSIVE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Department for Education guidance on *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* recommends that schools should: **'*Openly discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related difference'*.**

Student workshops and training opportunities, such as upstander training or anti-bullying ambassador workshops, can be a great way to upskill students. **Sessions should always be age and developmentally appropriate,** though this notion should not be used to limit or restrict the ability to celebrate difference, different families and diversity.

> ***I think that a lot of confidence has come from the trainings. We were talking a lot about upstanders and bystanders. I think there has been a bit of more confidence.***
>
> Student comment from the *Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying* programme focus group

Members of school staff, such as Pastoral leads, PSHE or EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) leads can build on inclusive training and development through additional opportunities to broaden their knowledge. This can be accessed through exploring national and international best practice on the teaching of diversity and inclusion.

For UK-focused expertise, schools can consult **Diversity Role Models**, **EqualiTeach** or **The Anti-Bullying Alliance**.

For international best practice, schools can additionally consult comprehensive sexuality education guidance and best practice provided by **UNESCO**, **UNFPA**, or **Plan International**.

References and Resources

References

All references can be accessed via the **blue hyperlinks**. You can download the PDF version of this report here in order to access all references and links: **www.diversityrolemodels.org/education-services/resources/department-for-education-best-practice-report-2024**

Diversity Role Models resources

From our three years delivering the *Embracing Difference, Ending Bullying* project and our **13 years' experience supporting schools to tackle and prevent bullying** we've seen inspiring transformations of school cultures using the approaches set out in this guide.

You are not alone on this journey and at **Diversity Role Models we have a wealth of resources and services to support you.**

- Role Model Stories and resources **free of charge here**

- Upstander Animations and resources **free of charge here**

- Enquire about student workshops, staff training, governor training or parent and carer sessions **here**

- Further information and resources can be found on our website: **www.diversityrolemodels.org**

Other DfE funded anti-bullying resources

In addition to funding Diversity Role Models, the Department for Education also supported anti-bullying activities and initiatives run by **Equaliteach**, **Anne Frank Trust** , **The Diana Award**, and the **Anti-Bullying Alliance**.

You can find out more about these organisations and any associated materials produced by them for the DfE project on their respective websites.

Diversity Role Models continues to work with funders and associated partners to reach our mission of promoting understanding and acceptance of individual differences and ending LGBTQ+ bullying in schools.

We invite you to join us!

Contact Details

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