

18.5.10
Response from Minister for CELL

Leighton Andrews AC/AM

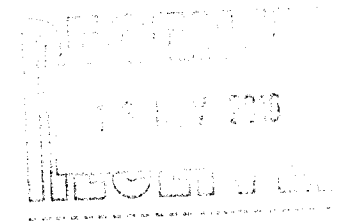
Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg & Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Ein cyf/Our ref LA/02933/10

Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



11 November 2010

Dear Christine,

P-03-303 Against Homophobic Bullying

Thank you for forwarding to me the petition from Oliver Townsend on compulsory guidance to schools concerning homophobic bullying.

I expect schools to take all forms of bullying seriously. Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, head teachers must determine measures to prevent all forms of bullying. Effective anti-bullying strategies should be central to a school's behaviour policy, and be developed and put into effect by everyone in the school, including the pupils.

The Welsh Assembly Government issued circular "*Respecting Others: Anti Bullying Guidance*" in 2003. The guidance sets out the different strategies that schools can implement, both in preventing and reacting to bullying incidents. New guidance is developed which we expect to publish in the New Year. The new suite of guidance will include specific and comprehensive guidance on homophobic bullying, and has been developed with the help of Stonewall Cymru and the Welsh Anti-Bullying Network.

Yours ever
Leighton

Leighton Andrews AM

Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning

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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

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Your Ref/Eich Cyf:

Date/Dyddiad:

Please ask for/Gofynnwch am:

Direct line/Llinell uniongyrchol:

Email/Ebost:

ST/SJ

2 December 2010

Steve Thomas

029 2046 8610

steve.thomas@wlga.gov.uk



WLGA • CLILC

Ms Christine Chapman
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Ms Chapman

Re: P-03-303 Against Homophobic Bullying

Thank you for your letter dated 8th November regarding the petition submitted by Oliver Townsend which called for the Assembly Government to issue compulsory guidance to all schools concerning homophobic bullying.

Tackling bullying is an important issue for schools and local authorities and a range of guidance and advice is already provided to schools on what action should be taken to encourage effective challenge to bullying behaviour. Such advice and guidance covers all forms of bullying, however, it is accepted that some forms of bullying are sometimes more difficult to deal with and challenge and as such additional guidance and support is required, for example, in relation to racist or homophobic bullying.

The WLGA was recently asked to comment informally on new range of draft guidance for schools, which includes homophobic bullying; sexist, sexual and transphobic bullying; cyberbullying; bullying around race, religion and culture and bullying involving children with special educational needs and disabilities. This guidance will form part of the extensive guidance on bullying which is currently available to schools and will help schools to address incidences of bullying, including homophobic bullying. Therefore, we understand that the Assembly Government will be circulating guidance to schools which will cover tackling homophobic bullying.

You also asked in your letter about any examples of good practice. I would like to highlight the work being undertaken by Cardiff Council's Schools and Lifelong Learning Service to address the issue of homophobic bullying. Following some research they undertook with pupils, the Council identified a number of fears, concerns and perceptions around homophobic bullying that were common to many pupils. The Council was concerned with the evidence they found and set about trying to resolve some of the issues highlighted.

Steve Thomas CBE
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In addressing their findings, the Service has embarked upon a number of activities to raise awareness of homophobic bullying and ensure that teachers and pupils are enabled and equipped to tackle incidents and increase understanding and tolerance. For example, they have held workshops with pupils (over 1000 year 9 pupils have been involved) and training for 140 education/youth professionals; encouraged the development of strategies for tackling 'hate incidents', including homophobic bullying, as opposed to seeing incidents as general misbehaviour; recognising and celebrating LGBT history Month. As a consequence of the approach taken by Cardiff's Lifelong Learning Service to address homophobic bullying, the Service has been awarded an Equality Mark by the LGBT Excellence Centre. To share the learning from this work, a presentation on the approach taken by Cardiff has been shared with other local authorities through the WLGA's Equality Officer's Network.

In conclusion, while the Association supports the aims of the petition and is sympathetic to the concerns identified, it is felt that with the WAG guidance that is expected, there is currently sufficient advice and guidance in place. It is also felt that focusing on the sharing and dissemination of examples of good practice would be of greater benefit than any additional compulsory guidance.

I hope you find this information useful but if you require any further details please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Thomas', written in a cursive style.

Steve Thomas CBE
Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

Response received from the petitioner 14-01-2011

Dear Wyn Jones,

Thank you for this information.

It says that the committee will ask the petitioner what they make of the information available. Is this to come, or does this email from you count as that invitation for a response?

Just in case it is, here is my response:

I'm happy with the response so far from the various interested parties. There are several things I would like to be taken into account properly in the WAG guidance being released, and would like (if possible!) for the Petitions Committee to push for it with the Minister.

1: to ensure that homophobic bullying (and transphobic bullying) are given an explicit reference in the guidance, so it is not any longer brushed under the "generic bullying" carpet - homophobic bullying has specific issues at its heart which are vitally important to understand if any successful intervention is to be made.

2: the sharing of good practice suggested by the WLGA is an excellent point, and I welcome it

3: I accept the NAHT's view that compulsory guidance might be seen as more controls over teachers

4: What mechanisms would the guidance provide to ensure that faith schools and fee-paying schools take significant action on this issue? Bullying in faith schools is at 75%, 10% higher than other schools. If the guidance is not to be compulsory, how can this higher incidence of bullying be addressed?

And that is all my observations for now.

I'd like to thank the Petitions Committee for dealing with this on my behalf, it means a great deal.

Regards,

Oliver Townsend

Stonewall Cymru Statement

Homophobic bullying is one of the most common forms of bullying in Wales.^[1] A Lack of clear guidance on how to tackle homophobic bullying in our schools is an unfortunate legacy of section 28. and is cited by teachers as one of the reasons for not challenging homophobia in school.

Such a passive approach merely reinforces the isolation felt by young lesbian gay and bisexual people in our schools, as well as others such as boys who are good academically, girls who are good at sports and other children who have parents and or family members who are lesbian gay or bisexual.

Stonewall Cymru believe that homophobic bullying, needs to be challenged. It is not challenged then the bullies are effectively given the seal of approval.

Our research shows the experiences of teachers and school children. Nine in ten secondary school teachers and more than two in five primary school teachers said that children and young people currently experience homophobic bullying.^[2] With 65% of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people experiencing homophobic bullying in school and 98% of gay pupils hearing homophobic language in schools.^[3]

If guidance remains optional then risks remain: that due to the low perception of homophobic bullying, the necessary steps to tackle it will not be taken. It is our firm belief and therefore recommendation that comprehensive and compulsory guidance is both necessary and required. We welcome any opportunity to assist government in drawing up such advice the future.

A fuller response will be available in coming days. But we are happy for you to use the above in drawing up papers for March 1st.

^[1] According to the Welsh Assembly Government Survey into the Prevalence and Incidence of School Bullying in Wales

^[1] The Teachers' Report, Stonewall (2007) www.stonewall.org.uk/educationforall

^[1] The School Report, Stonewall (2007) www.stonewall.org.uk/educationforall

Leighton Andrews AC/AM
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Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-303
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/00625/11

Christine Chapman AM

committee.business@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

16 March 2011

Dear Chris,

P-03-303 Against Homophobic Bullying

Thank you for your letter of 3 March with which you enclosed correspondence from Oliver Townsend.

As I mentioned in my previous letter, the Welsh Assembly Government will be issuing comprehensive new guidance on homophobic bullying later this year. We will also be issuing separate new guidance on sexist, sexual and transphobic bullying.

The aim of the guidance will be to help schools develop and implement their anti-bullying policies in the most effective way. All schools, including faith and fee-paying schools are required to have anti-bullying policies, and they will need to decide how they use the guidance, based on their own local requirements, and in line with their wider behaviour policies.

Yours sincerely
Leighton Andrews

Leighton Andrews AM
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning

Response from Stonewall Cymru

Petition P-03-303.

Response to the Petitions Committee

Thank you for inviting Stonewall Cymru to respond to the petition against homophobic bullying. In addition to the previous statement issued by on 21st February, Stonewall Cymru would like to discuss the issue of homophobic bullying in further detail whilst giving examples of good practice in tackling this.

Homophobic bullying is endemic in Welsh schools and the legacy of section 28 still remains in many classrooms where teachers feel unable to tackle homophobic bullying so simply ignore or dismiss this behaviour. Almost two thirds of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people at secondary school have experienced homophobic bullying. In faith schools, that figure rises to three in four. Added to this is the fact that less than a quarter of young gay people have been told that homophobic bullying is wrong in their school.

Research by Stonewall has found that homophobic bullying leads to truancy, poor educational performance and lower educational aspirations. Homophobic bullying is even more damaging to gay pupils from black and ethnic minority backgrounds (even if they have not been bullied). These pupils are twice as likely as white pupils to disagree with the statement "I plan to go to university or college when I finish school" and are three and half times more likely to disagree with the statement "It is important for me to finish school with good qualifications."

Homophobic bullying comes in many forms and affects straight young people as well as lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. The School report includes the following chart which gives a stark indication of the type of homophobic bullying that occurs in schools.

Type of bullying	Percentage of young gay and lesbian people
Verbal abuse	92%
Malicious gossip	76%
Intimidating looks	62%
Ignored and isolated	58%
Cyberbullying	41%
Physical abuse	41%
Vandalism and theft of property	30%
Death threats	17%
Threatened with a weapon	13%
Sexual assault	12%

Stonewall have been actively involved in tackling the problem of homophobic bullying for some time, and launched the Education for all campaign in 2005. Since then Stonewall has produced comprehensive research such as The School Report and The Teachers' Report which has highlighted how endemic homophobic bullying is in our schools and has informed much of the work that has been carried out since. Awareness raising campaigns have helped to develop materials like the 'Some people are gay, get over it!' posters, postcards and stickers as well as teaching resources such as the film FIT. Produced for Key Stages 3 and 4, FIT is a film about friendship, coming out and fitting in. All resources can be downloaded or ordered from the Stonewall website. The campaign also

includes the Education Champions programme which invites Local Authorities to work with Stonewall to improve their education standards for young LGB people.

Stonewall have found that with preventative and proactive steps, schools can dramatically reduce the incidence of homophobic bullying. Best practise shows us that young lesbian, gay and bisexual students are more likely to feel more positive about the actions that their school will take if explicitly stated that homophobic bullying is against the rules. In schools that have said homophobic bullying is wrong, gay young people are 60 per cent more likely not to have been bullied. When schools do state that homophobic bullying is wrong, lesbian and gay pupils are twice as likely to feel that their school is an accepting, tolerant school where they feel welcome.

By responding to homophobic bullying when it occurs, lesbian, gay and bisexual students are more likely to feel part of their school community, feel able to be themselves and to be respected for who they are, more likely to go to school and feel happy there and are more likely to have a positive attitude about their school.

Also, pupils who have been taught, in a way that they find positive, about lesbian and gay issues are also more likely to feel supported at school. These teachings impact positively upon a young persons feeling of safety within school, their feeling of respect and happiness, their enjoyment of school and their sense of support from an adult within that school.

In 'The School Report' Stonewall proposes ten key ways to support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils at school. Stonewall Cymru recommends that Local Authorities and schools follow these recommendations in order to reduce the incidence and occurrence of homophobic bullying. These include

Recommendations

1

Almost two thirds of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience homophobic bullying in schools, and 75 per cent of young people in faith schools experience homophobic bullying. Schools should acknowledge that homophobic bullying occurs in schools and take steps to prevent it, and respond to it. According to a recent YouGov poll conducted for Stonewall, 92 per cent of parents – including parents of under-18s – believe that homophobic bullying should be tackled. Nine out of ten 'people of faith' agree. The majority think teachers, head teachers and parents have a responsibility to take the lead.

2

Only a quarter of young gay people have been told that homophobic bullying is wrong in their school. In schools that have said homophobic bullying is wrong, gay young people are 60 per cent more likely not to have been bullied.

Lesbian and gay pupils feel more positive about their school if it has developed policies about homophobic bullying. They are twice as likely to feel their school is an accepting, tolerant school where they feel welcome. Schools should develop explicit homophobic bullying policies, tell pupils about them and implement them.

3

Half of teachers fail to respond to homophobic language when they hear it and three in five pupils fail to intervene but become bystanders to bullying. Even if a gay pupil has not been bullied, a culture of homophobia has an impact on their sense of belonging at a school. Lesbian and gay pupils are three times more likely to feel that their school is an accepting, tolerant school if schools respond to incidents. Staff should feel able to contribute towards a social environment where gay people, and gay issues, are respected.

4

Only 5 per cent of teachers are reported to respond every time they hear homophobic language. In total, 30 per cent of lesbian and gay pupils report that adults have been responsible for bullying them. Three in five pupils never report homophobic incidents. When they do, 62 per cent of the time nothing is done as a result of them telling a teacher. School staff need training to help them respond to, and prevent, homophobic bullying and support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils. When staff respond to incidents, pupils are more than three times more likely to feel their school is an accepting and tolerant environment.

5

Four in five young gay people have no access in school to appropriate resources that can help them stay healthy. There are no books in libraries, and they have no access to internet spaces. Only 15 per cent attend a local youth group but nearly two in five have attended a club or a pub. Young lesbian and gay people are two and a half times more likely to attend a gay pub or club, than a youth group. Schools have a responsibility to help all young people stay safe, and take healthy risks when they are growing up. Frequently, young lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils do not receive this support. Schools should ensure that pupils have access to the information and support they need.

6

Three quarters of young gay people who experience homophobic bullying have never heard lesbian, gay and bisexual people or issues discussed in school. Lesbian and gay pupils who have been taught about gay issues are 13 per cent less likely to experience homophobic bullying. Pupils who have been taught in a way that they find positive about gay issues are nearly 60 per cent more likely to feel happy at school. Schools need to consider ways in which sexual orientation can be integrated into the curriculum, in a positive and constructive way, which enables both heterosexual and gay pupils to understand and respect difference and diversity.

7

Fifteen per cent of young lesbian and gay people attend a gay youth group. Those who do attend a group are more likely to feel that there is an adult at home and school who they can talk to about being gay. Lesbian, gay and bisexual organisations can provide support to schools and young people to help lesbian and gay pupils feel more positive and included in their community. Working with bodies such as local authorities can also help schools support individuals and classes to prevent homophobic bullying.

8

Over 60 per cent of young lesbian and gay people feel that there is neither an adult at home nor school who they can talk to about being gay. Three in ten know a gay teacher, and are 72 per cent more likely to talk to an adult at school about being gay. Positive role models can help a young person feel more confident and comfortable. Teachers who are gay are in a strong position to fulfil this role, provided they are supported by their schools.

9

Lesbian and gay pupils report that they experience homophobic bullying even if they are not 'out' at school – 98 per cent hear “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” on a regular basis. Not all gay people are alike, and not all will experience being gay in the same way. Not all parents, governors or teachers will be heterosexual and not all pupils will grow up to be heterosexual.

10

Acknowledge and celebrate progress so that all pupils, parents, governors and staff know and understand the progress that is being made. Celebrating work will also allow other schools to learn – a quarter of pupils attend schools that state explicitly that homophobic bullying is wrong and this reduces levels of such bullying. These schools can help other schools. Lesbian and gay pupils feel more comfortable in school if they know there is an explicit policy about homophobic bullying, if there are resources available in school, if they know of a gay teacher, and if there is someone at school they can talk to.

Stonewall Cymru remains committed to tackling homophobic bullying in all its forms. We will continue to work with schools and Local Authorities to ensure that their anti bullying strategies are more inclusive and that they tackle the cause, effect and consequence of homophobic bullying more effectively.

Rhianydd Williams

Swyddog Addysg ac Ieuenctid/Youth and Education Officer

Stonewall Cymru