

# UPR Submission: United Kingdom

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Information submitted by:

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## International Human Rights Obligations and Commitments

1. We note that the United Kingdom has ratified:
  - **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, including Article 2 on non-discrimination and Articles 28 and 29 on the right to education
  - **The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, including Article 2 on non-discrimination and Article 13 on the right to education
2. We note that the United Kingdom has supported:
  - **The Human Rights Council Resolution on “Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity” (17/19)**
3. We further note that the United Kingdom has welcomed:<sup>2</sup>
  - **The Yogyakarta Principles**, on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity, which include Principle 2 on the right to equality and non-discrimination and Principle 16 on the right to education

## Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying in Schools

4. **Young lesbian, gay and bisexual people still face widespread discrimination, exclusion and verbal and physical violence within schools because of their sexual orientation.** Almost two thirds (65%) of young lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) have experienced bullying, and almost all (97%) hear insulting homophobic remarks and language in their schools. 70% of bullied LGB pupils report that this has a negative impact on their school work, and 50% have skipped school because of it.<sup>3</sup>
5. **Teachers are not given adequate training to be able to prevent and respond to homophobic bullying.** 90% of teachers and staff in secondary and primary schools have never received such training. Schools also fail to communicate clearly that homophobic bullying is wrong: only 23% of LGB pupils state that their schools have done so. As a result, over 50% of LGB pupils never report bullying. The pupils who do report homophobic bullying say that when they tell a teacher, more than 60% of the time nothing is done in response.<sup>4</sup>
6. **Local and school-specific data on incidents of bullying are needed for schools and local authorities to tackle bullying effectively and to track progress in the prevention of bullying.** Currently, there is no obligation for such data to be collected in the UK. However, some local

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<sup>2</sup> Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2008). An FCO programme for promoting the human rights of LGBT people. Retrieved from [www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/3849543/human-rights-lgbt](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/3849543/human-rights-lgbt).

<sup>3</sup> All data from: Stonewall (2007). The School Report. The experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools. Retrieved from [www.stonewall.org.uk/education\\_for\\_all/research/1790.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/research/1790.asp).

<sup>4</sup> All data from: Stonewall (2009). The Teacher's Report. Teachers' perspective on homophobic bullying in Britain's primary and secondary schools. Retrieved from [www.stonewall.org.uk/education\\_for\\_all/research/2731.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/research/2731.asp); and from: Stonewall (2007). The School Report. The experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools. Retrieved from [www.stonewall.org.uk/education\\_for\\_all/research/1790.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/research/1790.asp).

authorities are taking voluntary steps. In 2010, the Health Related Behaviour Survey (HRBS) was adapted in Cambridgeshire to include, for the first time, questions on homophobic bullying.<sup>5</sup> The survey, answered by all 4711 pupils aged 14-15 years in the county, found that:

- LGB pupils are more than three times more likely than their straight peers to be subjected to a wide range of verbal and physical aggression, including having: received nasty or threatening phone calls, text messages and emails; been threatened for no reason; been threatened with a weapon; and been ganged up on. They are also more likely to: be teased or made fun of; be called nasty names; be ignored or left out; be pushed or hit for no reason; be asked for money; and have their belongings taken or broken.
- 18% of LGB pupils are very often or often afraid of going to school because of bullying (compared to 4% of straight pupils) and an additional 25% are sometimes afraid of going to school (compared to 13% of straight pupils).
- 40-50% of LGB pupils report that schools do not tackle bullying at all or do not tackle bullying in a helpful manner, e.g. by having clear rules about bullying and always responding when bullying happens. Less than 30% find that schools take such steps against bullying in a way that is helpful.

7. **There is insufficient data and research documenting the prevalence, forms and consequences of transphobic bullying in schools in the UK.** Further research and data is urgently needed, as existing surveys show that young trans people face widespread discrimination, exclusion and verbal and physical violence within schools because of their gender identity or expression:

“Some 64% of young trans men and 44% of young trans women will experience harassment or bullying at school, not just from their fellow pupils but also from school staff including teachers. These are higher rates than shown in many studies on young lesbians and gay men at school. [...] [R]esearch also counters the commonly held belief that there is less tolerance of ‘sissy’ boys than tomboys, finding that females who become trans men later in life faced the most harassment and bullying [...]” (p. 16)<sup>6</sup>

The problems regarding the lack of teacher training and unavailability of local data (paragraphs 5 and 6) are even more pressing in the context of transphobic, rather than homophobic, bullying.

## Recommendations

8. In order for the UK to fulfill its human rights obligations under the CRC (art. 2, 28, 29) and the ICESCR (art. 2, 13), including to direct education to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, without discrimination of any kind, we recommend:
- i. That all primary and secondary schools record, monitor and publish data on homophobic and transphobic bullying and incidents.**
  - ii. That all teachers be provided with training on how to respond to homophobic and transphobic bullying during initial teacher training (ITT) and that Qualified Teacher Standards include explicit reference to homophobic and transphobic bullying.**
  - iii. That local authorities regularly conduct surveys on the health and well-being of pupils in primary and secondary schools, such as the Health Related Behaviour Survey (HRBS), that include issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity and bullying.**
  - iv. That the government commission research on the experiences of trans identified children and adolescents during primary and secondary education and on how schools best address their specific needs for protection from transphobic bullying.**

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<sup>5</sup> Baldwin Health Related Behaviour Survey (HRBS) 2010, Cambridgeshire.

<sup>6</sup> Whittle, S., Turner, L., & Al-Alami, M. (2007). Engendered Penalties: Transgender and Transsexual People's Experiences of Inequality and Discrimination. The Equalities Review. Retrieved from [www.nmhd.org.uk/silo/files/the-equalities-review.pdf](http://www.nmhd.org.uk/silo/files/the-equalities-review.pdf).