

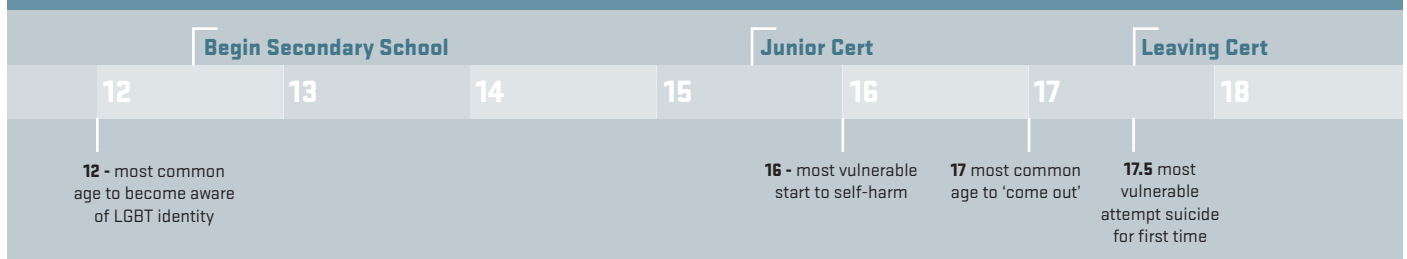
10 things you should know

about Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students



1. The most common age that people become aware of their lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) orientation is **12 years of age**.
2. The most common age that a young person will tell another person that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is **17 years** – on average 5 years after they have first realised themselves.
3. On average there are **at least one or two LGB students** in every class.
4. **More than half of LGBT students** have been called abusive names by fellow students – **40%** have been verbally threatened.
5. **One quarter of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students** have been physically threatened by other students.
6. **1 in 5 lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender** have missed school because they fear being threatened or hurt because of their LGBT identity.
7. **5% of lesbian, gay or bisexual students leave school early** because of the treatment they receive as a consequence of their LGBT identity.
8. Out of a sample of over 1,100 LGBT people **18%** had attempted suicide. The average age of first suicide attempt was 17.5 years. The average age of first self-harm was 16 years.
9. **Four out of every five teachers** are aware of the problem of homophobic name-calling. Nine out of ten say lack of policy hinders them in tackling this issue.
10. In schools that have clearly said homophobic bullying is wrong, LGB young people are **60%** more likely not to have been bullied.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS FOR LGBT YOUNG PEOPLE DURING SECONDARY SCHOOL YEARS (age in years)



5 things School Leaders can do to support lesbian, gay and bisexual students



1 DEVELOP POLICY

Include specific reference to sexual orientation (along with all grounds in the equality legislation) within existing school policy documents and mission statements. Policy documents of particular relevance include: Anti-Bullying, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), Guidance Plan, Staff development, Home-School-Community and Code of Behaviour.

2 PLAN AHEAD

Some young people will 'come out' (disclose their sexual orientation to others) while at school. School leaders can be prepared for such events and any consequences of such a disclosure by planning for how the school will deal with this. The Guidance Plan provides an opportunity for the school to clearly state the schools policy. Specific areas within the plan to consider addressing are; the level and type of support offered to students; implementation of Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy; reporting mechanisms for students in the event of bullying or harassment; relevant information to provide to students.

3 IMPROVE THE CLASSROOM

Teachers and other staff members want support in addressing the needs of LGB students. Many would welcome a whole-school initiative to develop and maintain a zero tolerance approach to the use of gay related language as terms of derision in all areas of the school.

Similarly subject planners need support in planning programmes that encourage respect for diversity and the dignity of each person. Subjects such as Civic,

Social and Health Education (CSPE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Religious Education and Social Studies provide an ideal framework.

Encourage class-based programmes to develop awareness of the impact of language/words and stereotyping on self and others. Specific reference should be made to anti-gay name-calling and stereotyping.

4 BUILD STAFF CAPACITY

Staff meetings provide a valuable forum in which to discuss how the school is responding to the needs of LGB students and addressing issues such as homophobic name-calling and bullying.

Most staff members would welcome professional development aimed at addressing homophobic bullying and the support of LGB students.

5 IMPLEMENT POLICY

Encourage and resource a small team of interested staff members to progress the school's response to these issues. Such a team could be encouraged to develop an action plan to ensure the inclusion of sexual orientation and LGB students in policy and practice.

Display information, including posters and leaflets about appropriate services for LGB young people.

Develop mechanisms for students to report bullying, including anti-gay name-calling, homophobic bullying or harassment.

Engage Parent Associations and Student Councils in addressing LGB issues.

For more on what school leaders can do to support lesbian, gay and bisexual students see accompanying resource *Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students in Post-Primary Schools: Guidance for Principals and School Leaders.*