

Educate and Celebrate:
a programme
designed to challenge
homophobic, biphobic
and transphobic
bullying in schools



Case Study: **Rockwood Academy**

June 2016



Funded by the Department of Education and the Government Equalities Office as part of a wider project to challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying, the Educate and Celebrate project was delivered at Rockwood in the school year 2015-16 as part of a programme delivered in 60 schools across England.

The project worked with the school in five key areas:

- Whole-school **training** on the legal mandate for this work; understanding key terms and key issues in relation to LGBT people; dealing with HBT bullying; and developing policy and curriculum
- The creation of a visibly inclusive school **environment**
- Updating school **policies** in line with the Equality Act 2010
- The usualising of LGBT people and issues across the curriculum
- Youth Pride Networks, **community** music performances, bake-offs and other celebrations

Executive Summary

This evaluation collected interview, focus group, survey and documentary data from Rockwood. It found that the Educate and Celebrate:

- was successful in challenging HBT bullying at Rockwood, with greatly increased confidence amongst teaching staff and an improved LGBT inclusivity rating for both staff and students in schools across the project
- had far reaching effects, including improved Ofsted findings; more effective teaching; and positive impacts across the wider remit of equalities and community cohesion- both in the school, and in the families and communities around them
- could be recognized as a template for the development of a range of areas in the task of school improvement

The training was found to have effectively addressed teachers' concerns about how to approach HBT language. Changing the school environment so that it is visibly welcoming of people with all the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 served to give the project the validity it needed when teachers in the Educate and Celebrate Coordinator (ECCO) role began to address the need for policy change. This led teachers and students to feel more confident in challenging HBT language and behavior; to be open about their own identities and their family make-up; to discuss LGBT people and issues across the curriculum; and to engage in community celebrations around the theme of equality.



Findings

Survey feedback

Staff and students at Rockwood who never 'heard people or things being called 'gay', 'lezzer', or 'lesbian' as a put down inside of school' rose by 15%, from 41% to 56%. They were also asked: 'When the word 'gay' is used as a put down or to describe something negatively in your school, how often does a teacher or other adult challenge it?' Those who said that teachers would 'never' address this fell from 8% to 0%. Further, those who said that people would 'often' be made fun of or targeted in Rockwood when they do not confirm to stereotypes of gender and sexual orientation fell from 8% to 0%.

Teachers and students also noted that they were 9% more likely to see an assembly at which LGBT issues were discussed. When staff and students at Rockwood were asked 'Do you think homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are a problem in your school?' the number of people who agreed with the statement dropped 20% from 33% to 13%. Finally, respondents were asked to give Rockwood a star rating for its LGBT+ 'inclusivity' (baseline survey) or 'friendliness' (exit survey). Those who gave the school 8 or more out of 10 stars rose 30% to 50% over the course of the programme.

Interview feedback

Training

The training developed Rockwood teachers' confidence in dealing with HBT bullying, improved their interactions with students in discussing LGBT issues, and impacted positively on their careers. The ECCO interviewed said that she enjoyed her training sessions. She greatly appreciated the opportunity to connect with colleagues from other institutions at training days conducted outside of their schools. In terms of those conducted in the school, teachers repeatedly praised the visit of the Educate and Celebrate trainer. They felt supported and that the trainers' enthusiasm and knowledge helped to galvanise their efforts and the validity of the project.

Environment

The evaluator found that changes to the physical environment at Rockwood influenced how comfortable, accepted and safe people felt after the project. This included both staff and students. The environment influenced how confident the ECCO felt in carrying out her role, and how able students felt to challenge HBT bullying and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language.

Policy

The Rockwood ECCO was supported to develop her school policies in line with the Equality Act 2010, in order to include all the protected characteristics. The act of updating the policies meant that her work came to the attention of the head teacher and governors, and embedded a key element of sustainability into the project. This all had a powerful impact on many areas of school life, particularly on student and staff willingness and ability to challenge HBT language and bullying; but also on the success, quality and authenticity of teachers' own pedagogical practice and careers.



Curriculum

Before the project had been delivered, students and staff at the school said that they only heard about LGBT people or issues in the very occasional assembly, or sometimes as part of PHSCE or RE lessons. The project asked the ECCO to work with curriculum leaders to develop lessons and schemes of learning which incorporated LGBT people and issues. At the end of the project she described multiple and comprehensive examples of relevant curriculum.

Community

The Community events broadened the learning out to parents and governors. The nature of 'celebration' directly challenged the stigma attached to LGBT people and issues, transforming the narrative from the risk of HBT bullying to pride in diversity. The community celebration events also gave the school focal points around which to develop curriculum and learning.

Other impacts: equalities in the local community and school improvement

Rockwood students' open-mindedness, often informed by internet media, lent itself to change within the community in many areas of equalities, beyond LGBT issues, as students and families started talking together about their experiences with the project. Some of the students said that they would like to make a documentary about how Muslim teenagers were against homophobia because they understood how it felt to experience discrimination and could empathize with LGBT people because of this.

Rockwood school staff also felt empowered to share their work across networks of local schools as a sustainable model not just for dealing with HBT bullying but as an effective approach to wider school improvement. They would like to become a Best Practice school in the area, leading other schools in developing their equalities work.

Perhaps because of its broad approach to equalities and community cohesion, pedagogy, and school environment, Educate and Celebrate was found to have positive effects on Rockwood's wider school improvement work. Related to this, there was evidence that the project had helped to enhance the school's Ofsted ratings.

