

Queer Representation: So what?

June 2023



QUEER EDUCATION
Consultancy

Summary

The impact of queer representation in schools is a topic of great interest, as we often wonder about the measurable benefits it can bring to both the students we teach and the staff in our educational institutions. Reports, such as those from *Just Like Us*, may initially appear to paint a bleak picture of the challenging experiences faced by many children and young people, particularly when coupled with sensationalist media reports.

Nevertheless, there is reason to be hopeful. This summary report presents impactful data collated from various sources in the UK. While there is still much work to be done in 'usualising' queer representation in schools, an increasing body of data is shedding light on the positive stories that have emerged so far.

For example, the ***Positive Futures*** report by *Just Like Us*, emphasises the influence a supportive school environment can have on children and young people. Additionally, the ***NEU LGBT+ Survey*** reveals that most LGBT+ educators feel secure at school, even if they have not yet come out at work. In addition, the majority of respondents are receptive to incorporating LGBT+ content into the curriculum.

Although this summary provides condensed key findings from each report, the complete reports can be accessed through the links provided at the bottom of each section.

The positive messages conveyed by these reports suggest that we are on the verge of unlocking the potential of *Diversity, Equality, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)* within the education sector. The initial findings overwhelmingly demonstrate the positive impact educators have already had on children, staff, and families. The future appears promising for fostering a culture of acceptance and valuing all members of our school communities. DEIB, and therefore queer inclusion, is a permanent fixture that will continue to gain significance across the education sector.

Regardless of where your school currently stands in its DEIB and queer inclusion journey, we hope that you find this summary informative.

Pearson's Diversity & Inclusion in Schools Report (2019-2020)

“How much do you feel that the following groups are represented in the resources, topics and materials that are taught in schools today?”

Non-binary – **34%**

LGBT+ – **40%**

20,000 young people in Britain are growing up with **same-sex parents**.

Only one in 10 teaching staff say LGBT+ people are **very represented** in what they teach.

1.2 million people aged 16 years and over **identify as LGB** in the UK.

25% [of teaching staff] were **worried** for their LGBT+ pupil's mental health.

20% [of teaching staff] were **worried** for their non-binary pupil's mental health.

Only 79% of teachers who do not feel reflected in education rate their school as **happy and healthy**.

“I'm confident the current education system provides the best outcomes for all students” **Only 57%** of teachers agree.

You can read the full report here: <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/educator/schools/issues/inclusion/diversity-and-inclusion-in-schools-report.pdf>

NEU LGBT+ Members Survey (July 2021)

Being out as LGBT+ at work

60% of respondents rated being 'out' at work as important or very important.

Only **9%** were 'out' to most/all people at work and nearly half were not open at work.

Feeling safe and supported at work

80% of respondents **felt safe** in school as an LGBT+ member of staff.

68% **felt a sense of belonging** in school as an LGBT+ member of staff.

Trans and non- binary staff felt the **least safe** and the lowest sense of belonging.

29% of our respondents had experienced being **bullied** at work, with this rising to **nearly half (49%)** of **trans and non-binary** staff.

32% were bullied from multiple parties. The most likely party to be carrying out bullying behaviours were **students** (reported by **65%** of those who had been bullied), followed by **colleagues** (reported by **34%** of those who had been bullied).

LGBT+ voice and representation in school

89% of respondents thought it was important or very important to have **visible LGBT+ role models** in school.

Nearly half are **not open** about their sexuality or gender identity at work it highlights the **potential invisibility** of many LGBT+ staff in schools.

Only **23%** of respondents stated that their school gathered the views and/or experiences of LGBT+ staff.

LGBT+ inclusive curriculum

92% of respondents thought it was important to have **LGBT+ inclusive content** in the curriculum.

The majority stated that LGBT+ inclusive curriculum **content is not taught** at all or only opportunistically.

Only **18%** stated that LGBT+ inclusive curriculum **content was taught** throughout the school year. Early years/primary school settings were **least likely** to teach LGBT+ inclusive curriculum content.

You can read the full report here:

<https://neu.org.uk/latest/library/lgbt-members-survey>

Relationships and Sex Education: The Evidence (November 2022)

LGBTQIA+ inclusive curricula were associated with **higher reports of safety** for individuals and **lower levels of bullying** in the school.

LGBTQIA+ young people in particular report their school **RSE teaching** being either **heteronormative** (non-inclusive of non-heterosexual identities and sex) or being overtly **homophobic**, and report consequent feelings of shame, of one's sexuality **not being 'legitimate'**.

39% of respondents to Sex Education Forum's latest survey (2022) said that they didn't learn anything about information relevant to trans and non-binary people.

You can read the full report here:

<https://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/resources/evidence/relationships-and-sex-education-evidence>

Just Like Us – Positive Futures Report (June 2023)

Of the LGBT+ young people who responded to the survey, those who grew up in unsupportive environments (as opposed to supportive environments) were:

Statement	Supportive environment	Unsupportive environment
1. Likelihood to feel ashamed of being LGBT+	9%	41%
2. Likelihood to have experienced a panic attack	28%	60%
3. Likelihood to experience depression	42%	82%
4. Likelihood to 'never or rarely' feel optimistic about their future	12%	42%
5. Likelihood to feel good about themselves	89%	41%
6. Likelihood to not be confident they'll have a career they enjoy	17%	48%
7. Likelihood to rarely or never feel close to other people	11%	49%
8. Likelihood to say they are happy in adulthood	85%	43%
9. Likelihood to be confident that they will find a life partner	70%	34%
10. Likelihood to have had suicidal thoughts and feelings	39%	85%
11. Likelihood to have self-harmed	33%	71%

“Given the high levels of family estrangement and emotional distance as well as a common lack of confidence that parents will be accepting, it is clear that outing LGBT+ young people to their families could be incredibly dangerous.

It is vital that schools are supportive towards LGBT+ young people – not only because this helps create an environment where all young people can thrive and learn about the diversity of the world around them but also because they need somewhere they can feel safe and accepted if home is unsupportive.”

You can read the full report here:

<https://www.justlikeus.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Positive-Futures-report-by-Just-Like-Us-compressed-for-mobile.pdf>

“It’s only made me more determined”
LGBT+ inclusive primary education in England and Wales: overcoming objections and
developing effective practice
(June 2023)

*“Quite often **children leave primary school prejudiced**, and that’s not because schools teach it, but they don’t do enough to counter it. And so it’s absolutely our job in primary schools to **show diversity in all its forms** because actually it’s a little bit too late by the time you’ve got to secondary school. You are a bit hardwired by then.” (Head teacher)*

Respondents perceived that **non-LGBT+ staff in particular** were **less confident** to teach inclusive content (this may be particularly significant given that LGBT+ staff are often – inappropriately – expected to lead on and deliver such content). LGBT+ staff also raised concerns about their own **safety and wellbeing and that of students**.

Some children (particularly in KS2) **may already be identifying as LGBT+**. Everyone has the right to receive positive messages about their emerging identities – not just those who will grow up to be heterosexual or cisgender.

You can read the full report here:


https://www.research.herts.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/43031182/LGBT_inclusive_primary_education_in_England_and_Wales_overcoming_objections_and_developing_effective_practice.pdf




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