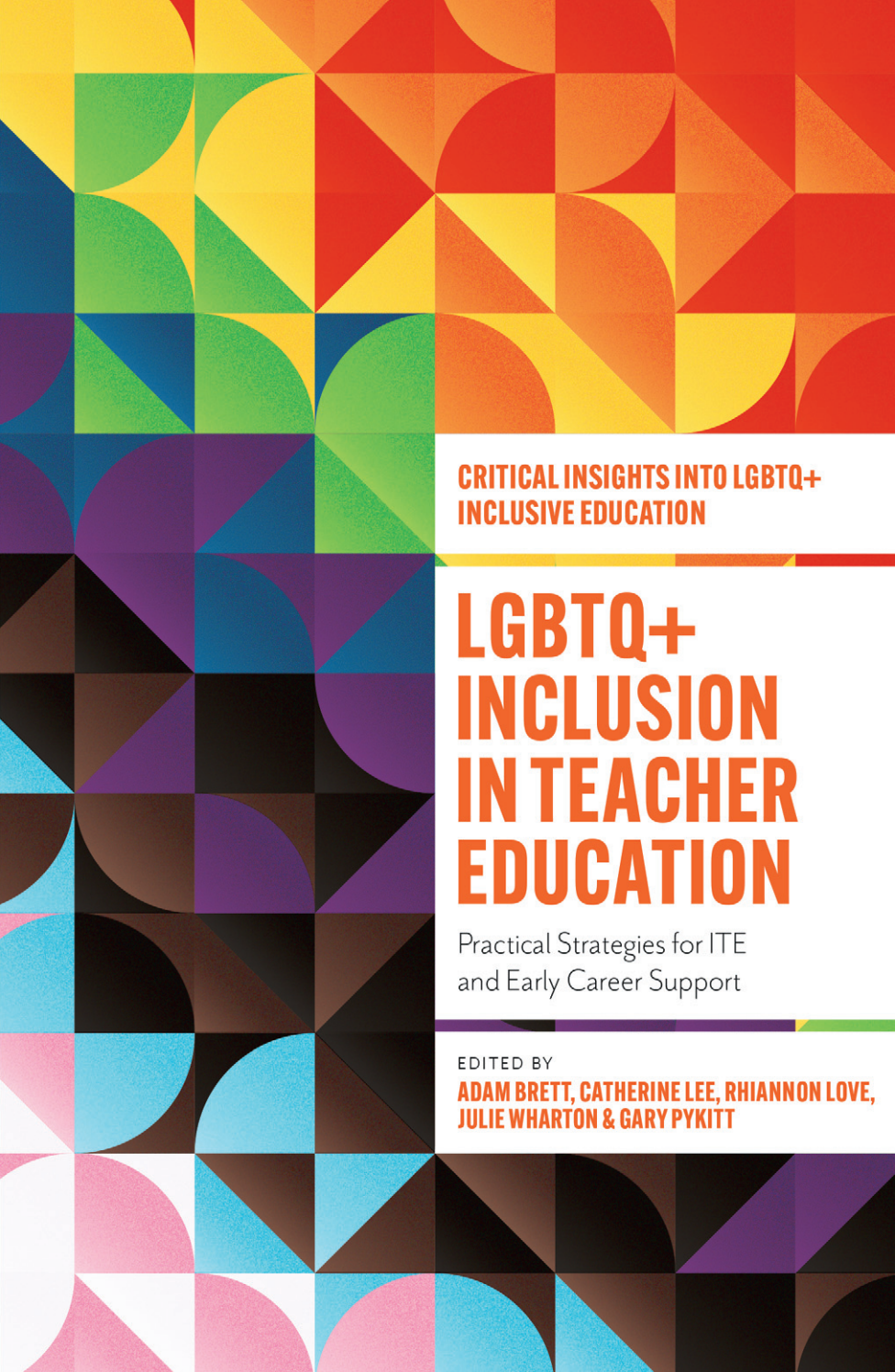

CRITICAL INSIGHTS INTO LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN TEACHER EDUCATION
Practical Strategies for ITE and Early Career Support
EDITED BY
ADAM BRETT, CATHERINE LEE, RHIANNON LOVE, JULIE WHARTON & GARY PYKITT

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Critical Insights into LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education

Series Editors:

Adam Brett, University of Derby, UK

Catherine Lee MBE, Anglia Ruskin University, UK

As researchers, educators and members of the LGBTQ+ community, we are immensely proud to introduce our book series, *Critical Insights into LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education*. This series is both a personal and professional endeavour. Put simply, this collection of books are the titles we wished we could have turned to when we were working as practitioners in schools and universities, and when we began our research careers. In the pages that follow, you will encounter research, experience, and innovative thinking that are ambitious, challenging, disruptive and constructive.

The series is borne from the work of our LGBTQ+ Research Network, an active and engaged international collective of over 300 scholars, educators and practitioners. These are people who come together regularly to share their insights, support one another and ultimately advance LGBTQ+ research. Our contributors come from a broad range of disciplines, career stages and educational settings. Each of these titles showcases the work of those who are committed to creating more inclusive, safe and equitable learning environments for teachers and learners. This series invites action, welcoming diverse voices and perspectives to question convention and spark bold, forward-thinking conversations.

At a time when the rights and protections of LGBTQ+ people are being actively eroded, this book series offers a

critically engaged yet resolutely optimistic and solutions-based intervention. The growing prevalence of exclusionary discourse, regressive policy developments and moral panic surrounding sexuality and gender identity underscores the urgent need for this suite of new titles. Each book centres affirmative and forward-looking scholarship that is grounded in the lived realities of LGBTQ+ learners, educators and leaders, many of whom know first-hand what it is to hide who they are.

Each book in the series is designed to explore a specific topic, combining research evidence with practical insight and personal narrative. The scope of the series is deliberately broad. It reflects the complexity of LGBTQ+ inclusion and the many contexts in which it plays out. We also know that LGBTQ+ inclusion does not happen in isolation. It is entwined with other protected characteristics, and this series will highlight the ways in which many minoritised identities intersect and shape experiences in education.

What makes this series distinctive is not only the breadth of its content but the strength of its community. The series emerges from collaborative conversations, mutual encouragement and the sharing of multi-disciplinary expertise that sits at the heart of our LGBTQ+ Research Network. We believe this 'community of practice' approach is itself a challenge to the silos that often dominate academia. This series mirrors the kind of inclusive practice we wish to promote; practice that is relational, practical and grounded in a determination to effect positive change.

This series is also designed to be responsive. Each book is concise enough to provide the agility to react to legislative change, media discourse or shifts in education policy. Our contributors write about issues that are personally significant and often painful, but each also writes about resisting,

persisting and creating inclusive spaces of joy, affirmation and new learning.

Each book in this series features one of the 11 colours of the Progress Pride flag on its spine. When placed together, the full collection aims to recreate the flag across your bookshelf. Designed by Daniel Quasar, the Progress Pride flag builds on the traditional rainbow associated with the LGBTQ+ rights movement, adding black and brown stripes to recognise marginalised racialised communities and pink, blue and white to represent trans identities. We have chosen this design because, like the flag itself, this book series is a compelling representation of our shared histories, collective resilience and ongoing commitment to social justice. At a time when LGBTQ+ inclusion is increasingly contested and under threat, this book series, just like the Progress Pride flag, stands as a rallying cry and a call to action. By grounding the series in the visual language of the flag, each book asserts our dedication to intersectionality, visibility and, of course, to progress. It imagines a future where LGBTQ+ inclusion isn't a fight but a fundamental right, one that is woven into the fabric of every learning space, where inclusion isn't an exception but an absolute expectation.

FORTHCOMING VOLUME

Queering the Curriculum in Higher Education: Multidisciplinary Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Queer Pedagogy
Edited by Sebastian Cordoba

LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Practical Strategies for ITE and Early Career Support

EDITED BY

ADAM BRETT
University of Derby, UK

CATHERINE LEE MBE
Anglia Ruskin University, UK

RHIANNON LOVE
University of Winchester, UK

JULIE WHARTON
University of Winchester, UK

And

GARY PYKITT
Birmingham City University, UK



emerald PUBLISHING

United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street,
Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2027

Editorial matter and selection © 2027 Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt.
Individual chapters © 2027 The authors.
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service
Contact: www.copyright.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80686-912-1 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-80686-909-1 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-80686-911-4 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

About the Editors *xi*

About the Contributors *xiii*

Introduction *1*
Catherine Lee MBE, Adam Brett, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

Part 1: Entering the Profession: Identity, Belonging and Early Experiences

Introduction *9*
Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

1 Choosing an Inclusive ITE Provider: A Guide for Prospective LGBT+ Trainee Teachers 13
George White

2 Navigating Personal and Professional Identity 21
Scotty Cartwright and Martha Crowfoot-Riggs

3 Developing Networks of Support 33
Jo Brassington

4 The Importance of Teacher Trade Unions 41
Huw Tindall-Jones

5 Creating Cultures of Belonging in Schools for LGBTQ+ Beginning Teachers 49
Julie Wharton and Rhiannon Love

6 School Culture and the Early Career Experience of LGBTQ+ Teachers 61
Charlotte Feather

7 Becoming and Belonging: LGBTQ+ Early Career Teachers Navigating the First Years of Teaching 69
Catherine Lee MBE and Dean Barber

Conclusion *77*
Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

Part 2: Mentoring, Coaching and Professional Support

Introduction 81
Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

8 ITT Quality Compliance Criteria and Mentoring: Minding the Gaps 83
Leanne Gould and Gary Pykitt

9 Let's Talk About Identity: How Understanding Teacher Professional Identity (TPI) can Enhance the Coaching Experience for Coachees 91
Nathan Douglas

10 Mentor Practices for Supporting LGBTQ+ Beginning Teachers 99
Jessica Whetton

11 Affirming Mentorship: Supporting LGBTQ+ Beginning Teachers to Explore Their Teacher Identity 107
Dean Barber

Conclusion 115
Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

Part 3: Embedding LGBTQ+ Inclusion Into Professional Practice

Introduction 119
Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

12 Navigating LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Conservative Religious Beliefs With Compassion and Respect 123
Alexis Stones and Hannah Jayne

13 "Beyond Subject Boundaries." Preparing Beginning Teachers to Teach LGBTQ+ Content Through an ITE Cohort-Wide PSHE Study Programme 131
Sarah Hall

14 Stronger Together: Supporting ITE Students in Building LGBTQ+ Communities of Practice 145
Rhiannon Love, Catrina Kirkland and Yentl Love

15 Having the Conversations: Embedding LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Secondary Teacher Training 157
Tasnim Husain Curtis and Kerrie Parsons

16 Professionalism and Queer Pedagogies 163
Charlotte Feather

Conclusion 173
Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

Part 4: Inclusive School Cultures, Leadership and Policy

Introduction 177
Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

17 Inclusive Spaces Beyond Labels: Recognising and Respecting the Community Context 181
Ela McSorley and Philip McCahill

18 Language and Labelling: How Words Shape Ethos in Schools 193
Julie Wharton

19 School Governors' Role in Promoting the Inclusion of LGBTQ+ Beginning Teachers 205
Andrew Moffat

20 Supporting LGBTQ+ Early Career Teachers to Become School Leaders 215
Catherine Lee MBE

Conclusion 223
Adam Brett, Catherine Lee MBE, Rhiannon Love, Julie Wharton and Gary Pykitt

Afterword 225
Further Reading and Resources 229
Index 231

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Dr Adam Brett is a researcher and a Lecturer in Education at the University of Derby with 15 years of experience as a secondary school teacher and leader. He also has over nine years of experience in teacher training, running both a school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) provision as well as teaching on university initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. Adam has researched and written extensively on the topic of LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools and is the founder of the LGBTQ+ Research Network and, along with Jo Brassington, is the co-founder of Pride & Progress.

Professor Catherine Lee MBE is the Pro Vice Chancellor and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University. She has published extensively on the theme of LGBTQ+ inclusion in education, and her articles have attracted national media interest. Catherine works with teachers, school leaders and university staff and students to promote diversity and inclusion in Education and is a passionate advocate of authentic leadership. In 2023, Catherine received an MBE for Services to Equality in Education.

Dr Rhiannon Love is a Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Education at the University of Winchester. She is the curriculum lead for Primary Religious Education and Philosophy

for Children, and her research interests are in the areas of Philosophy for Children, with particular interest in its potential as a research method as well as for supporting wellbeing, Primary Religious Education and LGBTQ+ student teacher experience.

Dr Julie Wharton is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Winchester, specialising in inclusive education and the development of teachers who centre equity and belonging. Drawing on her background in schools and local authority work, her research, teaching and consultancy work focus on creating spaces where all members of educational communities – regardless of background or identity – are welcomed, supported and heard. She is committed to developing inclusive practice through teacher education, policy reform and dialogue-driven research. Julie's recent work includes a co-authored chapter with Rhiannon Love in *The Guide to LGBTQ+ Research* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2025), where they explore allyship and researcher positionality in ITE, thus highlighting the importance of reflexivity and identity in inclusive scholarship.

Gary Pykitt is an experienced Senior Lecturer in Primary ITE at Birmingham City University, specialising in professional studies and diversity, equity and inclusivity. He has worked as a primary school teacher and a school governor in a range of schools. His book, *Shifting Sands*, was published by Critical Publishing in 2019, and he has recently written a chapter about hope through effective school governance for a book based on LGBTQ+ Leadership in Education. He is currently working towards his Professional Doctorate in Education with a working title, 'A hopeful future? A critical exploration of the possibilities for teachers enabling LGBT+ representation and inclusivity in mainstream primary schools'.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Dean Barber is a Senior Lecturer Practitioner and a Course Director, at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge.

Jo Brassington (they/them) is a co-founder of Pride & Progress, a lead associate at Belonging Effect and holds a PhD researching LGBTQ+ networks in Education.

Scotty Cartwright (he/they) is a Teacher of English and Media Studies, an ECT Mentor, a Staff Governor, a Teaching and Learning Community Facilitator and leads the Pride group at a school in Derbyshire.

Martha Crowfoot-Riggs is the Head of Geography and a Teacher of Academic PE/Games, a Girl's Rugby Coach, a Visiting Tutor (Boarding) and leads the student DEI committee at a school in Bath.

Tasnim Husain Curtis is a Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader of the Secondary School Led PGCE at the Institute of Education at the University of Winchester.

Nathan Douglas is the Deputy Head Teacher of Camp Hill Primary School and a Teacher Coach.

Charlotte Feather (she/her) is a Senior Lecturer in Professional Development and International Education and a Programme

Leader of MA SEND and Inclusion at the University of Sunderland.

Leanne Gould is a Senior Lecturer and a Professional Academic Lead in the Department of Education at Birmingham City University.

Sarah Hall is a Professor in Religion and Education, School of Education, University of Birmingham.

Hannah Jayne is an Assistant Head Teacher in The Judd School.

Catrina Kirkland (she/her) is a Senior Lecturer in Secondary Humanities and a Programme Leader of Secondary Humanities PGCE at The Institute of Education at the University of Winchester.

Yentl Love (she/her) is a Lecturer in Ancient History, Sexuality and Queer Theory at City Lit, London.

Philip McCahill is an Assistant Headteacher in a large UK Academy.

Ela McSorley is an Executive Principal in a large UK Academy.

Andrew Moffat MBE is Founder and CEO of No Outsiders and Personal Development Lead at Excelsior Multi Academy Trust, where he works with schools to promote equality, inclusion and respect through education.

Kerrie Parsons is an Associate Senior Leader, Teaching and Learning, and a Professional Mentor at Swanmore College, Rural Schools Alliance.

Alexis Stones is a Subject Lead, Religious Education PGCE, UCL's Institute of Education.

Huw Tindall-Jones is the Industrial Organiser with National Education Union, Southwest Region.

Jessica Whetton is a Doctor of Education Student in the Department of Education at Birmingham City University and a Learning and Development Consultant, with a background in primary education.

George White (he/him) is a Teacher of Religious Education and a freelance consultant delivering LGBT+ Inclusion for Catholic Schools at www.transcatholicteacher.com

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

CATHERINE LEE MBE[a], ADAM BRETT[b], RHIANNON LOVE[c], JULIE WHARTON[c] AND GARY PYKITT[d]

[a]Anglia Ruskin University, UK
[b]University of Derby, UK
[c]University of Winchester, UK
[d]Birmingham City University, UK

The practice of equality, diversity and inclusion in education is being re-examined, contested and quietly rolled back. What was once gaining ground as a shared professional commitment to fairness now feels less certain. Policy guidance in Education has become more ambiguous and public discourse has become more polarised as populism heads to the United Kingdom at speed from Trump's America. In schools, the erosion of inclusion has translated into a growing sense of fear about what can be said, what can be taught and how far teachers can safely be visible in their personal identities.

For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus (LGBTQ+) schoolteachers, the erosion of inclusion is felt acutely in everyday lived experience. They are under pressure to manage or conceal aspects of their identity to align with narrowing norms of professionalism, a burden not placed on their cisgender and heterosexual colleagues (Brett, 2024). As Lee (2023) argues, schools are key sites where gender and sexuality are shaped and regulated through everyday practices. In this context, LGBTQ+ inclusion can no longer be taken for granted; it must be actively created, sustained and defended.

It was from concern for the precarity of LGBTQ+ inclusion that the idea for this book was conceived. The editors of this book are former teachers and teacher educators, all experienced in navigating schools through the lens of LGBTQ+ inclusion. This is the book we wished had been available when we first entered the teaching profession.

This book is research-informed but rooted in practice. It brings together scholarship, lived experience and professional insight and is written for a wide and interconnected audience. It is for those considering a career in teaching who are LGBTQ+ and may be asking whether there is a place for them in schools. It is for LGBTQ+ beginning teachers who are trying to navigate identity, belonging and professionalism in their first placement school. It is for mentors and teacher educators, shaping the experiences and confidence of new and early-career LGBTQ+ teachers. This book is also for school leaders, whose decisions and cultures determine whether inclusion is tangible or merely symbolic. And it is for policy makers, whose frameworks and guidance set the conditions within which LGBTQ+ inclusion does or does not take place.

Every author in this curated collection of chapters brings a depth of lived personal and professional experience. They have been LGBTQ+ trainee teachers navigating their first placements, and early career teachers working out how to balance authenticity and safety, or allies, determined to support the LGBTQ+ community. They are mentors supporting LGBTQ+ teachers and school leaders, shaping cultures and making decisions that affect LGBTQ+ inclusion in real and immediate ways. Each chapter is rich in lived experience from school classrooms, staffrooms, universities and school-centred initial teacher education programmes.

The book is organised into four thematic sections. The chapters in each section follow a clear, practice-focused structure. They begin with a critical question to frame

reflection, followed by a blend of research, policy and lived experience. Each chapter concludes by signposting the reader to relevant resources and key takeaways that offer practical insights that readers can apply in their own contexts.

Part one of the book begins by examining the process of selecting an initial teacher training provider, recognising that this early decision can significantly shape an LGBTQ+ teacher's experience, sense of identity and access to support and validation. An introduction to the teaching profession follows through the lens of identity, belonging and early experience. Navigating the interplay between personal and professional identities is explored next alongside practical strategies to help build networks of support, understand the role of trade unions, and reflect on how school cultures are negotiated. At its core, the section explores what it means to begin teaching in environments that are not always inclusive, and how a sense of belonging can be fostered in those crucial early years.

In part two, the focus shifts to mentoring, coaching and professional support, foregrounding the relationships that shape how LGBTQ+ beginning teachers experience the profession. The section explores the limitations of compliance-driven frameworks and highlights how mentors can move beyond these to actively affirm LGBTQ+ identity and wellbeing. It examines coaching through the lens of teacher professional identity, showing how identity-centred dialogue creates space for reflection, confidence and growth. Attention is also given to how mentoring practices shape lived experience, particularly in moments of uncertainty around disclosure and expectation. Together, these chapters position mentoring not as a neutral process, but as a critical site where identity, confidence and belonging are either enabled or constrained.

Part three asks how LGBTQ+ inclusion can be embedded into the substance of teaching itself. Through a series of case studies, this section explores how inclusive perspectives can be integrated meaningfully into subject content, challenging dominant narratives and expanding ways of knowing. It considers how structured programmes can equip beginning teachers with the confidence, knowledge and understanding to teach LGBTQ+ content across diverse school contexts. The role of informal networks and communities of practice is also examined, highlighting the importance of creating spaces for connection, reflection and identity affirmation. The section concludes by challenging traditional notions of professionalism, reimagining pedagogy as a space for critical, inclusive and transformative practice. Across this section, chapters argue that inclusion must be embedded within curriculum and pedagogy, rather than treated as an addition.

In part four, the focus broadens to inclusive school cultures, leadership and policy, examining the systems and structures that shape the conditions in which LGBTQ+ teachers work and progress. The section explores the role of governance in shaping inclusive school cultures and embedding LGBTQ+ inclusion within the whole-school ethos. It then considers the influence of language and labelling, showing how everyday terminology shapes LGBTQ+ belonging and visibility. This is followed by an examination of the relationship between national policy and local practice, highlighting how wider political frameworks are interpreted and enacted within schools. The final chapter turns to leadership, exploring how LGBTQ+ teachers can be supported not only to remain in the profession, but to progress to leadership and drive inclusive best practice.

The book concludes by signposting the reader to useful resources that promote LGBTQ+ in Education.

Overall, this book reframes LGBTQ+ inclusion in school as a matter of structure, culture and power, not individual teacher resilience (Love & Wharton, 2025). It shows how mentoring, curriculum, school culture and policy actively shape the progress of LGBTQ+ beginning teachers. For those entering or working within education, it aims to offer recognition, reassurance and kinship. We aim to give readers the confidence to name what is often left unspoken and the tools to act on it.

Ultimately, we hope that this book moves readers from understanding to action, helping to create education spaces where LGBTQ+ trainee and early-career teachers are supported to belong, flourish and eventually become confident and accomplished school leaders.

REFERENCES

Brett, A. (2024). Under the spotlight: Exploring the challenges and opportunities of being a visible LGBT+ teacher. *Sex Education*, *24*(1), 61–75.

Lee, C. (2023). *Pretended: Schools and section 28: Historical, cultural and personal perspectives*. John Catt.

Love, R., & Wharton, J. (2025). Can I be myself here? LGBTQ+ teachers in Church of England schools. *Social Sciences*, *14*(10), 590.

This page intentionally left blank

Part 1

ENTERING THE PROFESSION: IDENTITY, BELONGING AND EARLY EXPERIENCES

This page intentionally left blank