

# Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying and LGBT Inclusion in English Schools

Eleanor Formby, Martin Culliney,  
Claire Wolstenholme & Bernadette Stiehl



# **Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying and LGBT Inclusion in English Schools**

Research matters. Research on the challenges and affordances of what it means to address homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic (HBT) bullying as part of building lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT)-inclusive schools matters a great deal. Drawing from a unique data set of quantitative and qualitative data from over 850 primary and secondary schools, each chapter progressively illustrates that schools must be supported to go way beyond having an HBT anti-bullying policy or setting up an LGBT youth group, or delivering a one-off drop-down-themed Pride day. Embedding and enacting policies and practices, and normalising LGBT+ inclusivity is what will bring about change and not just for LGBT+ students but for all young people. This ground-breaking book is replete with case studies and testimonies from staff and students, in ways that bring the survey data to life and in ways that every school in England can learn lessons from. It's an accessible and timely go-to text as LGBT+ inclusivity gains more prominence in England's statutory relationships and sex education guidance and provides a vital research benchmark for future work in this area.

—*Professor E.J. Renold,*  
**Cardiff University, Wales**

While plenty of researchers speculate about what causes bullying related to LGBT+ young people, this important book is data driven, using a large-scale study to develop understanding of bullying in English schools. Novel findings include – identifying a preference among educators for addressing bullying, versus efforts at LGBT+ inclusion; gaps between what adults deemed acceptable versus students' expectations; recognition that bullying doesn't only impact LGBT+ pupils; and, identifying methodological issues related to prevalence of bullying – key to debates about how bullying is constituted in academic research and LGBT+ activism. It's a must read for researchers, policymakers, and educators working to support LGBT+ students.

—*Professor Mary Lou Rasmussen,*  
**Australian National University, Australia**

This book is incredibly important as it documents the largest-scale study of HBT bullying and LGBT inclusion in English schools to date. It provides an invaluable picture of school-based HBT bullying and strengthens the evidence for HBT prevention and LGBT inclusion. These insights make for essential reading for anyone committed to creating a whole-school environment where LGBT+ students and teachers can thrive and not just survive.

—*Professor Louisa Allen,*  
**University of Auckland, New Zealand**

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BY

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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 2025

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83708-449-4 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83708-448-7 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83708-450-0 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*Dedicated to Jo Woodiwiss, the most supportive partner in life anyone  
could ever have wished for.*

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# Preface

*Eleanor Formby*

This book was completed in 2021 (over three years ago at the time of writing this), but because the (Conservative) Government at that time did/would not publish the publicly funded research on which this book is based, a contractual clause meant any further publishing on the research was not allowed<sup>1</sup> (see [Grove, 2024](#)). I believe their decision not to publish the research was related to rising transphobia within the United Kingdom (and elsewhere in the world).<sup>2</sup> The research was completed in 2019, at a time when there were steps towards improving school environments for trans children and young people. Since then, however, significant societal changes in public awareness and opinion have rendered the context for trans children and young people (as well as adults) substantially worse. Kemi Badenoch, now Leader of the Conservative Party/Leader of the Opposition, was, at the time the research and book was completed, Minister for Women and Equalities and therefore head of the Government Equalities Office who funded the research. She has been outspoken in her beliefs on trans people: in 2020, for example, she met with the LGB Alliance, a campaign group that the head of the United Kingdom's communications regulator Ofcom has described as 'entirely inappropriate' to quote on trans issues ([Provost, 2021](#)). The following year, she was recorded as referring to trans women as men ([Bancroft, 2021](#)), and in the run-up to the 2024 general election, Badenoch said that the Conservatives would change the Equality Act to enable organisations to bar trans women from single-sex spaces ([Elgot, 2024](#)). She was ultimately responsible for the decision not to publish this (and other) research on LGBT+ lives; research which highlights the poor experiences of trans people – experiences that it could be argued

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<sup>1</sup>The new Labour Government subsequently published the research, which has enabled the publication of this book.

<sup>2</sup>This is not to suggest, however, that the Labour Government are making moves towards trans inclusion or equality, as they appear to be continuing the previous Conservative Government's direction of travel, most recently with Health Secretary Wes Streeting upholding his predecessor's 'emergency' ban on puberty blockers for trans young people ([Hymas, 2024](#)). Labour Equalities Minister Anneliese Dodds has also said that trans people should have a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, rather than allowing legal gender self-identification ([Hymas, 2024](#)). During electioneering, the now Prime Minister Keir Starmer also said, mirroring the Conservative Party stance, that he was opposed to 'gender ideology' being taught in schools ([Corbett, 2024](#)).

Ms Badenoch was at least indirectly contributing to, so it is perhaps not surprising that she did not seem to value the research. What is possibly a little more surprising is that in not publishing publicly funded research, the government was not adhering to its own *Government Social Research Publication Protocol* (2022),<sup>3</sup> contractual requirements to publish research outputs,<sup>4</sup> and stated commitments to open research.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, I saw a production of *After the Act*, a musical which draws on people's memories, Hansard<sup>6</sup> extracts, and media coverage of the time to tell the story of Section 28.<sup>7</sup> It was entertaining and informative, but it was also deeply moving – both for its depiction of the period and because I could not help but see the similarities to today. Looking around the audience, it was clear that many of us lived through the era of Section 28 – some of us as pupils in school then; some of us as school staff members. The production illustrated the opposition by gay rights activists (as they were often then known) at the time and also signalled the parallels to the context today for trans people. As the director has noted,

it only takes a cursory look through the coverage of Section 28 at the time to see the connections between fear-mongering around 'positive images' of gays and lesbians in schools, and the demonisation of trans-inclusive education and young people's access to gender-affirming services today. (Barrett & Stevens, 2024, p. 9)

For any readers unaware, the changing context I refer to lies in increasing trans visibility and simultaneous backlash. As Amery (2023) has documented, through a detailed analysis of resources produced by anti-trans organisations such as Transgender Trend, growing awareness and campaigning on the subject of children and young people's gender identity in particular has produced a moral panic. Moreover, Amery (2023) argues that the United Kingdom is an important case to examine, because it demonstrates how anti-trans organising, whether labelled as 'trans-exclusionary radical feminism' or 'gender critical' (see Pearce et al., 2020, for further discussion), has become highly embedded in public discourse. Such activists

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<sup>3</sup>See [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1078983/2022-GSR\\_Publication\\_protocol\\_v4\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1078983/2022-GSR_Publication_protocol_v4_Final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Unless otherwise agreed between the Contractor and the Project Manager, all outputs from the Project shall be published by the Department on the Department's research website' (Clause 26.1, taken from the signed contract with Sheffield Hallam University).

<sup>5</sup>Amanda Solloway MP, as Minister for Science, Research, and Innovation stated, 'We have a duty to make the findings of publicly funded research openly available, to make them as useful and impactful as possible to all potential users, for the benefit of everyone' ([www.gov.uk/government/speeches/science-minister-announces-ukris-open-access-policy](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/science-minister-announces-ukris-open-access-policy)).

<sup>6</sup>Hansard records all spoken debates in the Houses of Parliament.

<sup>7</sup>Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 forbade English, Welsh, and Scottish local authorities from 'promoting' 'homosexuality as a pretended family relationship' (Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1988). For further detail, see Baker (2023) *Outrageous! The Story of Section 28 and Britain's Battle for LGBT Education*.

often say they are taking a stance against ‘trans ideology’ or ‘gender ideology’, frequently focussing on limiting children and young people’s access to information and/or affirmation regarding trans identities. These arguments often rest on the notion of ‘protecting’ children and young people, and thus link to wider debates about childhood ‘innocence’, a theme which flows throughout this book. As [Amery \(2023\)](#) has noted, innocence and vulnerability are weaponised against queerness and in defence of children’s assumed heterosexuality – and this can be extended to assumed cisgender identity too. This growing public discourse conforms to previous moral panics in that it aims to ‘reassert adults’ power to control the knowledge available to children and to define what is acceptable or age-appropriate’ – and it relies on a fear of contagion, that is, the belief that ‘children will imitate what they read about or are told about’ ([Amery, 2023](#), p. 101). The common use of the word children in anti-trans campaigning deliberately draws attention away from older young people, who are equally being denied access to information and support that research suggests could decrease school absenteeism, lower levels of victimisation of trans youth, and contribute to improved mental health and well-being outcomes ([Greytak et al., 2013](#); [McDermott et al., 2023a](#)).

The influential impact of these campaigns and beliefs could not be clearer in the Department for Education’s release of *Gender Questioning Children: Non-statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges in England* in December 2023. In the Foreword, Badenoch and Keegan (then Secretary of State for Education) use the term ‘gender identity ideology’ uncritically and explicitly discourage schools and colleges from supporting a child or young person’s social transition (e.g. regarding names, pronouns, access to spaces, uniforms, and physical education and sports), including encouraging the involvement (‘great weight’) of parents, which may of course be against the wishes of the child/young person. As commentators have pointed out, the reason this guidance is non-statutory may be because its implementation could contravene the Equality Act (which prohibits discrimination against trans(gender) children/young people in schools in England, Wales, and Scotland). Furthermore, ‘gender critical’ campaigning against factual information about trans identities (as well as broader relationships and sex education in schools) from mainstream organisations such as Barnardo’s, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), and the PSHE Association has resulted in the withdrawal and curtailment of such information by various local authorities.

All this is to say that the context for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) inclusion in English schools has changed rapidly in the period that the Conservative Government prevented the publication of this book. However, it still reports on the largest known study of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic (HBT) bullying in the country and points to measures that can be taken to improve the experiences of LGBT+ young people. This is all the more important because of the evolving context for trans people. The following chapters in this book (Chapters 1–8) remain largely as they were in 2021, but a short postscript has been added. The value of this book is that it offers, from multiple angles, such a detailed picture of HBT bullying and LGBT inclusion in English schools: from staff and pupils; from primary and secondary schools; from quantitative and qualitative data. With the evolving context explored above, this picture is very unlikely to have improved.

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# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who supported and/or participated in the research on which this book draws. The authorship of this book reflects involvement in its writing, but the study was a team project: Eleanor Formby was the overall lead, and Martin Culliney and Claire Wolstenholme managed the quantitative and qualitative components, respectively. The qualitative fieldwork was conducted by Eleanor Formby, Claire Wolstenholme, and Bernadette Stiell. There was additional project support from Sean Demack (as statistical lead) and Louise Glossop and Linda Bray (administrative support). We thank everyone for their work. Thanks are also due to Mike Coldwell, Sean Demack, Wendy Morgan, Tig Slater, and Jo Woodiwiss for commenting on draft chapters and particularly Guy Merchant for commenting on multiple chapter drafts.

The research was funded by the then Government Equalities Office,<sup>8</sup> though the views expressed within this book are ours alone and do not reflect those of the government or its staff. Finally, thanks to staff at Emerald for their support and understanding.

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<sup>8</sup>The Government Equalities Office existed under the Conservative Government. The newly formed Labour Government elected in 2024 established the Office for Equality and Opportunity, within which the Women and Equalities Unit leads on work related to gender equality, LGBT+ people, and the framework of equalities legislation in the United Kingdom.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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2019 was a year of ups and downs for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) inclusion in English schools and was the year we completed our research on which this book draws.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, the government announced – for the first time – that primary-level relationships education, and secondary-level relationships and sex education would become statutory in England, and that it should be LGBT inclusive (Department for Education (DfE), 2019a). On the other hand, there was widespread media coverage of the opposition some schools face when implementing LGBT-inclusive curricula, resulting in the DfE releasing guidance on *Primary School Disruption Over LGBT Teaching/ Relationships Education* (DfE, 2019b). Complexities surrounding both of these notwithstanding, they demonstrate both the shifting social and political landscape surrounding LGBT inclusion and the difficult circumstances that many schools fear and some schools face. The research on which this book draws took place in this context and involved over 61,700 individuals (both pupils and staff) from over 850 schools in England. Further detail on how the project was undertaken is included in the Appendix. This introductory chapter summarises our research and outlines the contents of the remainder of this book. We begin by addressing some of the key terms and concepts relevant to this book and the abbreviations we use.

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<sup>1</sup>As the research was completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult to know how HBT bullying and LGBT inclusion in schools were affected by this. However, it is known that some LGBT+ young people were particularly affected by the period of ‘lockdown’ when schools in England were closed (Formby & Woodiwiss, 2021). The implications of this book therefore hold most relevance to a period when pupils are attending school ‘as normal’.

## Key Terms and Concepts

Throughout this book, our preferred acronym to describe people is LGBT+, in acknowledgement that identities and lived experiences extend beyond the more limited acronym of LGBT. The plus symbol includes a range of people who may align themselves with the LGBT ‘umbrella’ but who may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans. This might include, for instance, those who identify as genderfluid, non-binary, pansexual, polysexual, or queer. However, when citing literature, participants, or data collection tools, we replicate the original terminology, and so acronym use does, at times, vary. We are very aware that the LGBT umbrella includes both sexual and gender identities, which in itself can be problematic (Formby, 2017), and we are therefore careful to use terminology that is specifically about sexual identity or gender identity when appropriate, ensuring that bisexual or trans identities are not only there in name, as is sometimes the case. Equally, we acknowledge that people’s sexual and gender identities intersect with other aspects of their identities (McBride, 2021; Taylor & Cuthbert, 2019), and where possible, we discuss this within our examination of the data.

The term ‘bullying’ is widely understood (at least in the United Kingdom) as a description of negative actions among children and young people that are intended to cause fear, distress, or harm and which are persistently repeated over a period of time (DfE, 2011; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009). Bullying experiences can vary in intensity, including physical and verbal actions, and may either be short term or sustained over a long period of time. Fenaughty (2019, p. 630) has suggested that

given the destructiveness and complexity of bullying as a form of school-based oppression ... there is a requirement to conceptualise bullying beyond the overt traditional caricatures of direct verbal and physical aggression to include covert, indirect and social-relational bullying behaviours, including social rejection, exclusion and rumour spreading.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2016, p. 14) has also used the term ‘violence’, as well as ‘bullying’, to describe homophobia and transphobia in schools, noting that this ‘form of school-related gender-based violence ... includes physical, sexual and psychological violence and bullying and, like other forms of school-related violence, can occur in classes, playgrounds, toilets and changing rooms, on the way to and from school and online’.

While the term ‘homophobia’ is rooted in psychology (Adam, 1998), and therefore not without its problems (Fish, 2006; Herek, 2004), it is often the word used to denote prejudice towards LGB (and sometimes trans) individuals or groups. Biphobia and transphobia are often not acknowledged or examined to the degree that homophobia is but similarly refer to prejudice towards bisexual and trans people, respectively. However, a focus on ‘phobias’ can be critiqued for focussing on individualised fear or prejudice; the word ‘phobia’ actually derives from the Greek word for fear (Fish, 2006). Fox (2009, p. 160) has gone as far as to argue that ‘homophobia has been inaccurately allowed to mask its intolerance as a mere

fear rather than open and irrational hatred ... [which] has afforded legitimacy to queer hatred and intolerance'. In a different vein, Yip (2012) has suggested that instead of citing homophobia, it may be more productive to use the concepts of discrimination, hostility, negativity, and/or prejudice, as they are more recognised and possibly less emotive/condemning. Despite these critiques, the terminology of 'phobias' is often used to describe certain forms of bullying. While the term 'transphobia' is sometimes used in school settings, there is a documented view that the subject is too challenging or complex to address (Mitchell et al., 2014), and a range of evidence suggests that responses to biphobic and transphobic bullying have been less developed and/or attracted less confidence and awareness (Formby, 2015). While homophobia had often been the focus of earlier research, the publication of government-funded research in 2014 signalled a shift to the more expansive phrase 'homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic' bullying, and the associated HBT acronym, in the United Kingdom at least. As we go on to discuss in Chapter 2, although scholarship has demonstrated that school-based experiences are more complex than individualised notions of bullying, schools and advocacy do tend to focus on bullying.

Taking a broader view of the social contexts in which prejudice towards LGBT+ people is formed and played out, it is important to understand the notion of normativities. The term 'heteronormativity' was coined by Warner in 1991 and refers to 'the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm, to the detriment of alternatives' (Gunn & Smith, 2015, p. 9). As Gunn and Smith (2015, p. 15) argue, this is preferential to homophobia because it 'places heterosexuality rather than same-sex attraction under investigation'. As a concept, it explains a 'hierarchical system in which heterosexual identities and expressions are privileged above non-heterosexual identities and expressions' (Pearson & Wilkinson cited in Bryan, 2019, p. 257). Although Allen (2020a, p. 663) explains that homophobia is 'a product of heteronormativity', she notes that the term 'homophobia' 'holds currency in schooling contexts where it has been recognised as a legitimate issue in need of educational attention. As such, homophobia has political clout, in a way that the concept of heteronormativity does not'. DePalma and Jennett (2010, p. 16) also remind us that 'as a means of enforcing heteronormativity, homophobia affects everyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity'. Allen (2020b, p. 443) also clarifies that 'homophobia does not need a queer-identified subject to be its target to operate. Nor, does homophobia need an ignorant or fearful (human) subject to perpetuate it'. Alongside the term 'heteronormativity', heterosexism also implies a broader, more sociological, analysis, but neither are as widely understood or used as the concept of homophobia (Hillier & Harrison, 2004). As Fish (2006, p. 7) has described, heterosexism is 'structural and macro-level ... privileging of heterosexuality over homosexuality and its assumed normality. The term seeks to draw attention to the ways that heterosexuality is inscribed in institutions, cultural practices and everyday interactions', with schools being an obvious example.

Similarly to heteronormativity, cisnormativity is a concept that explains 'the privileging of people who identify their gender as consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth' (Gunn & Smith, 2015, p. 15), and 'the belief that gender

is a binary category that naturally flows from one's sex assigned at birth' (Martino et al., 2022, p. 753). McBride (2021, pp. 103–104) has similarly described cisheteronormativity as 'a social hierarchy premised on gender anatomy-identity congruence and the binary division of male and female ... Cisheteronormativity privileges cis[gender] people as "normal" and stigmatizes trans bodies, identities and expressions as illegitimate and inferior'. A companion term 'cisgenderism' also describes 'the cultural and systemic ideology that denies, denigrates or pathologizes self-identified gender identities that do not align with assigned gender at birth, as well as resulting behavior, expression and community' (Martino et al., 2022, p. 753).

When referring to homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in this book, we mean for these to be understood as shorthand for opposition to LGBT+ identities and relationships that are embedded within social structures and processes. As O'Brien (2008, p. 497) notes, homophobia (and we would also apply this to biphobia and transphobia) 'differs from the common definition of "phobia" in that the fear is not rooted in individual experience, but rather in culturally learned prejudices'. We therefore do not see prejudice towards LGBT+ people as an individualised phenomenon but as a 'broad social and institutional problem' (Bryant & Vidal-Ortiz, 2008, p. 389). This book therefore builds on previous scholarship that has advocated for a sociological perspective to be brought to the field of bullying research (Formby, 2015; Pascoe, 2013a; Payne & Smith, 2013).

Sikes et al. (2007) have noted that despite their international use, the terms 'inclusive' and 'inclusion' are vague and not commonly understood, and this has implications for the implementation of inclusion policies and approaches within schools. To talk about such inclusion as 'work' is problematic, but it is terminology in frequent use and is therefore used throughout this book. Although talking predominantly about 'diversity work', and occasionally 'equality work', Ahmed's (2007a) writing has resonance here, in drawing attention to how legislation and associated policy frameworks have contributed to seeing equality and diversity (and we would extend this to the notion of inclusion too) as performance indicators, subject to auditing. This can mean that having policies and plans in and of themselves can be judged as 'good practice', so that all the diversity/equality/inclusion that is 'done' is in effect documentation, with the existence of documentation taken as proof that this 'work' has been done (Ahmed, 2007a). In her words, 'the idea that the document is a doing is what could allow the institution to block recognition of the work that there is to do' (Ahmed, 2007a, p. 607), as if saying 'we are inclusive' makes it so.

The concept of sexual citizenship is not new (see Bell & Binnie, 2002; Evans, 1993; Kaplan, 1997; Richardson, 2000), broadly referring to how sexuality informs constructions of citizenship, including collective, legal, material, political, and relational rights and experiences (Richardson, 2017, 2018). However, it is only recently that scholars have begun to focus on this concept within the realm of youth studies. As Aggleton et al. (2019, p. 7) summarise,

much existing writing remains limited in its scope, focusing on particular topics, such as young people's lack of access to comprehensive, inclusive sexuality education ... or more general issues, such

as the challenges young people face growing to become informed and responsible citizens capable of making independent decisions around sexual identity and wellbeing.

Of particular relevance to this book, [Robinson \(2012\)](#) has discussed the concept of ‘difficult citizenship’, with notions of childhood innocence often curtailing young people’s access to education about gender, sex, and relationships ‘that is equitable, honest, evidence informed and fair’ ([Aggleton et al., 2019](#), p. 7). As she explains, ‘the concepts of *childhood* and *innocence* have been utilized to regulate children’s access to knowledge of sexuality and to deny their relevance and access to sexual citizenship’ ([Robinson, 2012](#), p. 258, original emphasis). Although Robinson primarily focussed on sex education here, we would extend her argument to also include the presence (or more accurately, absence) of LGBT+ identities within school spaces. [Angelides \(2019, p. x\)](#) has also argued that ‘sexuality is the most highly cherished marker delineating the boundaries between childhood and adulthood ... when adult sexuality or sexual frameworks are thought to be prematurely imposed on children, usually grave concerns and anxieties about their wellbeing are voiced’. The notion of innocence therefore runs throughout this book, and we return to reflect on it further in Chapter 8.

## The Research

Before outlining our research, we offer here some brief explanations of English schools, by way of context. Throughout this book, we refer to primary and secondary schools which, respectively, refer to those aimed at children and young people aged 4 or 5 to 10 or 11 (depending on date of birth) and 11 or 12 to between 15 and 18 (depending on examinations taken). English schools can have ‘a religious character’ (often referred to as faith schools), or none, with the former including Catholic, Church of England, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, and Sikh schools ([Taylor & Cuthbert, 2019](#)). Everyone of school age in England is entitled to a free place at a state school, though there are some grammar schools which select pupils based on academic ability (i.e. there is a test to gain entry). In addition, ‘special’ schools specialise in taking pupils with special educational needs (see [www.gov.uk/types-of-school](http://www.gov.uk/types-of-school)). Our Appendix sets out the mix of schools involved in the research. Although we use the term ‘school’ as shorthand throughout this book, there were also some sixth-form colleges involved (for those aged 16–18).

This book draws on a study commissioned by the then Government Equalities Office in 2016 as part of their wider programme of work attempting to prevent and respond to HBT bullying in English schools. This evaluation research examined a support package that 1,674 English schools received to help them address HBT bullying. Six external voluntary sector organisations<sup>2</sup> developed and delivered this support package with funding from the government (2016–2019) to help

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<sup>2</sup>Barnardo’s, the LGBT Consortium (comprising a network of partner organisations), METRO, the National Children’s Bureau, the Proud Trust, and Stonewall.

schools become more LGBT-inclusive spaces. Schools were invited to take part in the programme if they had not received any support or training in this area previously. This work is referred to as ‘the programme’ within this book, though we also discuss the support of external agencies within schools in more general terms. The programme specifically sought to increase the numbers of:

- schools with policies and curricula embedded, targeted at preventing and tackling HBT bullying and building inclusive LGBT environments
- teachers and non-teaching staff reporting that they feel supported, confident, and capable of preventing and tackling HBT bullying and building more inclusive school environments
- pupils saying that they feel confident in reporting HBT bullying, feel more resilient towards bullying, and feel their school is inclusive towards LGBT pupils and families.

Although our dataset is limited to schools that opted into the programme, the responses and comments of research participants address matters of wider import and application than the programme itself, and these form the focus of this book. The themes we address therefore speak to the wider picture of LGBT inclusion and HBT bullying in schools, and we draw on our learning from the evaluation and our wider reflections on the data in general.

The research process is described in more depth within the Appendix (detailing our quantitative and qualitative research methods, research limitations, and participants) but in essence involved the following chronological stages:

1. A scoping phase which involved gathering information from each service provider on their plans and approach to working with schools
2. A baseline survey, prior to delivery of the programme beginning in schools, targeted at all staff (not only teaching staff) working in participating schools, and a baseline survey of pupils in schools where providers were delivering more than just staff training (targeted at three different year groups: Year 4 or 5, Year 7 or 8, and Year 9 or 10, depending on the timing of the schools’ survey)
3. In-depth telephone interviews with five school leaders<sup>3</sup> to help understand particular challenges they faced in participating in the programme, including the perspectives of some who dropped out and some who stayed involved in the programme
4. Follow-up surveys following service provider support, targeted at staff who responded to, and the same pupil groups involved in, the baseline surveys (pupils now in Years 5/6, 8/9, and 10/11, depending on the length of initiatives in school)

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<sup>3</sup>This was usually a member of the school’s senior leadership team (SLT), but sometimes, it was the member of staff responsible for overseeing personal, social, health, and economic education (PSHE), or its equivalent, in school.

5. In-depth case studies, following or towards the end of the programme, in 12 schools (6 primary schools, 6 secondary schools), involving individual interviews, paired interviews, and/or focus groups with 65 staff/governors and 89 pupils,<sup>4</sup> on-site observations, and documentation review, with all case study schools having experienced more external input/support than only staff training
6. In-depth telephone interviews with a further 13 school leaders who were not able to commit to school case studies but who shared their perspectives on being involved in the programme.

The aims of the first three stages were to help us understand the starting point and current issues within participating schools. Following on from this, the final three stages focussed on both the process and impact of being involved in the programme, from the perspectives of various staff and pupils. Though we did capture perspectives on, and experiences of, standalone training, the programme and our linked research placed an emphasis on whole school approaches, which can entail a variety of activities within school. As one case study participant illustrated:

We did quite a lot ... we did look at the website and policies and suggested things we could put on our website, which we did. They did staff training. They did a coffee morning with parents. We had literature and different books out and had a big conversation with governors and some staff and parents, and just looked at the stories and kinds of things that would be addressed progressively across the school. They worked with our [pupil] ambassadors, so they did a lot of work sort of training them about ... what all the terminology was and how they could help ... so they could challenge it and know what to do in school ... We got feedback as well at each step, so we knew the kind of things that we needed to do.  
(Case Study 3, primary headteacher)

## **This Book**

This book is intended to provide an overview of what we believe is the largest-scale study of HBT bullying and LGBT inclusion in schools in England to date (in future publications, we intend to explore in more detail specific aspects, such as the perspectives of primary pupils, who are less included here). This book primarily focusses on qualitative data drawn from stages five and six above (i.e. in-depth research methods staggered throughout the research period), alongside quantitative data drawn from Stage 2 (i.e. the baseline surveys), which we believe offers a unique picture of English schools at the end of the last decade.

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<sup>4</sup>In total, 154 people were involved in the case studies, which involved 11 individual or paired interviews and 19 focus groups.

All survey data are presented according to school phase. Drawing on answers to demographic questions, our survey results are also broken down into two categories: those that identified as LGBT+<sup>5</sup> and those that did not. As our Appendix illustrates, we had 61,708 survey responses, but because numeric primary pupil data are excluded here,<sup>6</sup> we are drawing on data from 56,645 secondary pupil and staff responses (drawn from 853 different schools).<sup>7</sup>

In the chapters that follow, we use both the quantitative and qualitative data to explore key themes. Qualitative data extracts are labelled with school phase and participant role, with some further detail provided in the Appendix (though limited to ensure school and participant anonymity). Before beginning to address our own data, in the following chapter (Chapter 2), we offer some context for the research, including both a policy and practice overview and a summary of existing scholarship. Chapter 3 begins our empirical insights, examining approaches to HBT bullying prevention in English schools. In Chapter 4, we then explore HBT bullying experiences and staff responses, with sections on witnessing HBT bullying, experiencing HBT bullying, reporting HBT bullying, and responding to HBT bullying. Chapter 5 turns to look at LGBT inclusion in English schools, focussing on perceptions of LGBT inclusion, LGBT inclusion in the curriculum, and wider (in)visibility of LGBT+ identities in schools. In Chapter 6, we examine challenges and barriers to HBT bullying prevention and LGBT inclusion in schools, splitting these into practical and more substantive barriers. Chapter 7 is our final empirical chapter, which explores factors that enable LGBT inclusion in schools, as well as the impacts of this for pupils and more broadly. Chapter 8 concludes this book, where we return to some of the conceptual ideas outlined above and discuss our overall observations about HBT bullying and LGBT inclusion in English schools.

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<sup>5</sup>See the Appendix for response options. As some respondents declined to provide these data, the numbers of LGBT+ individuals may be higher than we report.

<sup>6</sup>In this book, we have chosen to focus on secondary pupil and staff data for three reasons: contractual word constraints; primary pupil question wording was the most different from the other surveys and therefore provides the least comparability; primary pupil data could not be broken down by LGBT+/non-LGBT+ status (as this age group was not asked these demographic questions).

<sup>7</sup>Each question had some missing respondent data, so not all data tables add up to 56,645.