What will the school gain from joining the LGBT+ Groups in Schools Alliance (GSA)?

A priority for all schools is the safety, health and wellbeing of all of its students. Approximately 2 in every 10 of your students will identify as LGB, and we must ensure that all young people feel safe, welcome and respected within their schools and colleges. According to the 2018 National LGBT Survey undertaken by the Government Equalities Office, unfortunately, there continues to be a lack of positive LGBT+ inclusion within schools:

- LGBTphobic bullying continues to persist with LGB people twice as likely to be bullied in secondary school compared to their heterosexual peers
- LGBT+ students do not feel their needs are addressed, particularly in regards to Relationships and Sex Education
- Almost a tenth of all the LGBTphobic serious incidents reported in the findings were committed by teaching staff
- 83% of the serious incidents reported in the findings were unreported in schools with the most common reasons stated as ‘nothing would happen or change’ and it ‘happens all the time’
- Only 13% of trans respondents said their teachers were very or somewhat understanding

For some students these could be daily experiences that will severely impact upon their health and wellbeing. These experiences result in the attendance of LGBT+ young people falling below the national average. Evidence supports the link between attendance and progress and attainment.

The LGBT+ Groups in Schools Alliance helps to raise the visibility of your school’s positive stance on LGBT+ inclusion. Having a group in school to support your LGBT+ students says very clearly that you respect and welcome them, and that LGBTphobia is not tolerated within your establishment.

How can the LGBT+ Groups in Schools Alliance support us in working towards our attendance targets?

Students who identify as LGBT+ have lower than national average attendance. This has been linked to their health and wellbeing and the risks to these they face in school. There is no end in the research showing that
LGBT+ young people are disproportionately affected by mental health issues. This negative mental health is not caused by them being LGBT+, but rather by them not feeling included, accepted, or integrated in the spaces where they exist. The “Queer Futures” research undertaken in 2016, found that LGBT+ young people were least likely to ask their schools and teachers for help and support.

Your students must have confidence in staff, that if LGBTphobic incidents occur, they will be appropriately dealt with. Having a group in your school to support LGBT+ students can help to signpost students to supportive staff members who have been trained, and are comfortable discussing LGBT+ topics and using appropriate terminology.

**Will this significantly impact upon the workload of some of the staff?**

Membership to the LGBT+ Groups in Schools Alliance includes a handbook on how to set up a group, reducing the time a staff member will need to plan how to create and begin the group. Once the group is up and running, the relevant members of staff will receive a weekly activity idea for their group, meaning that no planning time will be required. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of your students we suggest there are staff members attached to the group, but we recommend encouraging your students to take ownership of the group, create a committee, and lead it themselves with minimal teacher input.

**How can the LGBT+ Groups in Schools Alliance support us in achieving the Rainbow Flag Award?**

Joining the LGBT+ GSA is clear evidence in helping you meet the requirements of the “Pastoral Support” section of the Rainbow Flag Award. Having an LGBT+ group in your school also provides a fantastic opportunity to meet the requirements of other sections of the award:

- Listening to the students and helping them to implement their ideas in what is needed for LGBT+ inclusion in the school (Pupil Voice section)
- Creating policies that meet the needs of your LGBT+ students (Effective Policies section)
- Redesigning lessons to be more inclusive of all students (Inclusive Curriculum section).
Can the LGBT+ Groups in Schools Alliance support us in meeting the objectives laid out by the new DfE Relationships and Sex Education guidance?

From September 2020, the changes in regards to statutory Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education come into full force. The LGBT+ Groups in Schools Alliance will help you meet these objectives in the following ways:

- It will be evident in your organisation that ‘schools take positive action...to deal with particular disadvantages affecting one group because of a protected characteristic’ (obj.29) as you listen and take actions on the feedback from the students in your group.
- By actively listening to the experiences of the students in your group, increasing the visibility of the LGBT+ community and actively taking a stance against LGBTphobia you will ‘be alive to issues such as homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackle’ (obj. 31).

What about Ofsted?

Ofsted are fully supportive of positive LGBT+ inclusion, looking for it in their inspections, aligning their inspection guidance with the Equality Act 2010, which requires you to:

- Eliminate bullying of all kinds, including that which is LGBTphobic
- Make reasonable adjustments for students that need extra support
- Promote positive inclusion of minority groups including LGBT+ lives and identities

Do LGBT+ people not have equality? Shouldn’t we treat all of our students the same way?

LGB people are twice as likely to be bullied in school than their heterosexual peers. Only 13% of trans people feel their teachers are understanding. The LGBT+ Groups in Schools Alliance supports you in setting up a safe space for LGBT+ people in your school. This provides a fantastic opportunity for staff to actively listen to the needs and concerns of your LGBT+ students on a regular basis, as although laws and educational guidance are changing to be more LGBT+ inclusive, there continues to be many areas within schools where LGBT+ students are overlooked.
• Can your LGBT+ students/students with LGBT+ families talk about LGBT+ life and issues without fear of how others will react?
• Can your LGB students learn about romantic relationships from the lessons which are currently delivered?
• Can your LGB students learn about safe and healthy sexual relationships from the lessons which are currently delivered?
• Does your curriculum reference LGBT+ specific role models your students can look up to?
• Are your LGBT+ students confident that they will not be outed by staff?
• Do your LGBT+ students know who they can turn to if they have LGBT+ specific problems at home or out of school?
• Can your trans students use their bathroom without fear of discrimination?
• Can your trans students use the changing facilities without stares, fears or anxiety?
• Can your trans students be confident that staff and students will use their preferred pronouns and the name they give?

An LGBT+ group in your school will help your LGBT+ students feel heard. They will be able to share with you the barriers that stand in the way of their learning and how they feel they could best be supported.