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The Importance of Teaching - The Schools White Paper 2010 Suggested Amendments

Global Respect In Education, GRIN Campaign, has reviewed the Educational White Paper from the perspective of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, asexual and questioning students, employees, associates and their allies.

The Educational White Paper states that: "Teachers, pupils and charities report that prejudice-based bullying in particular is on the increase. It is of course unacceptable for young people to be bullied because of their sexuality, yet this happens to two thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils."ⁱ Despite this assurance of educational equality the Schools White Paper 2010 does not make mention of transgender or gender identity, asexual, or other conformative related bullying.

British society is becoming increasingly liberal and with increasing occurrence students are revealing their gender variance or sexuality. Now more than ever we are being made aware of students struggling within their educational institute with bullying and exclusion within the community. This problem is not unique to students, as teachers and other staff are also suffering discrimination and sometimes physical and verbal abuse.

Bullying is not only stemming from students, but also from teachers. Around one quarter of trans students say that teachers have bullied themⁱⁱ and half of teachers fail to respond to homophobic language when they hear it. Less than one quarter of our schools have actually told pupils that homophobic bullying is wrong.ⁱⁱⁱ

Bullying of any kind can result in both emotional and physical damage. Homophobic, gender variance and transphobic based bullying manifests as verbal abuse and physical confrontation often of a sexual nature. Quotes and stories regarding bullying from the students that we have spoken to are included at the end of this document. GRIN Campaign is also developing lesson plans for different educational levels to try to combat the problem of discrimination based bullying.

GRIN Campaign suggests the following amendments with regard to the Schools White Paper:

Key: (Original Text ~~Remove Text~~ Add Text Please Note)

Executive Summary, Paragraph 8, Page 9, Point 2:

Reform initial teacher training, to increase the proportion of time trainees spend in the classroom, focussing on core teaching skills, especially in teaching reading and mathematics, and managing behaviour ~~-~~**paying particular attention to managing discrimination biased bullying.**

Executive Summary, Paragraph 8, Page 9, Point 5:

~~Recognise that schools have always had good pastoral systems and~~ **Understand** well the connections between pupils' physical and mental health, their safety, and their educational achievements, and that they are well placed to make sure additional support is offered to those who need it. **Specifically providing a safe and confidential way for pupils to express their emotions and concerns, for example with regard to sexuality and gender variance.**

Executive Summary, Paragraph 9, Page 10, Point 2:

Strengthen head teachers' authority to maintain discipline beyond the school gates, improve exclusion processes and empower head teachers to take a strong stand against bullying, especially racist, homophobic, **transphobic** and other prejudice-based bullying.

Executive Summary, Paragraph 9, Page 10, Point 7:

Focus Ofsted inspection more strongly on behaviour and safety, including bullying, **especially prejudice-based bullying**, as one of the four key areas of inspections.

Executive Summary, Paragraph 9, Page 10, Point 8:

Introduce a survey and concluding report on LGBT+^(M) bullying and safety in the school environment.

Executive Summary, Paragraph 20, Page 13, Point 5:

Reform Ofsted inspection, so that inspectors spend more time in the classroom and focus on key issues of educational effectiveness, **especially taking note of discrimination based bullying**, rather than the long list of issues they are currently required to consider.

Teaching and Leadership, Paragraph 2.35, Page 26:

As part of that review we will look at the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), which define what teachers must know and be able to do in order to qualify to teach. There are currently 33 QTS standards, only one of which focuses solely on teaching and learning. We will ensure that the new standards have a stronger focus on key elements of teaching, including: the best approaches to the teaching of early reading and early mathematics, how best to manage poor behaviour, **including how to prevent and handle bullying**, and how to support children with additional needs, including Special Educational Needs.

Teaching and Leadership, Paragraph 2.48, Page 28:

The majority of the important work that schools do is not as a result of government prescription – for example intervening early and offering additional support to pupils who need it, protecting pupils from harm, and working with their local communities. Good

schools play a vital role as promoters of health and wellbeing in the local community and have always had good pastoral systems. They understand well the connections between pupils' physical and mental health, their safety, and their educational achievement. They create an ethos focused on achievement for all, where additional support is offered early to those who need it, and where the right connections are made to health, social care and other professionals who can help pupils overcome whatever barriers to learning are in their way. Good schools work with parents, community organisations and local agencies to create a healthy, safe and respectful environment in school, after school, and on the way to and from school. Good teachers instil an ethos where aspiration **and respect for individuality are** the best reasons for children to avoid harmful behaviour.

Teaching and Leadership, Paragraph 2.51, Page 29:

Nationally, we will continue to work with the Department of Health in line with their forthcoming Public Health White Paper, the Home Office and other Departments to ensure that schools have access to high quality, evidence-based information. Locally, we will rely on schools to work together with voluntary, business and statutory agencies to create an environment where every child can learn, where they can experience new and challenging opportunities through extended services, **where they can learn lessons of acceptance that will help them to become a respectful generation of tomorrow**, and where school buildings and expertise are contributing to building strong families and communities.

Teaching and Leadership, Paragraph 2.54, Page 30:

We support the idea that good schools set themselves targets, identify the strengths and weaknesses that might either help or hinder them to achieve those targets, and come up with a plan for succeeding. But having a centralised target setting process, in which central government challenges local government to come up with a large number of targets which add up to the ideal national total, and local government **e-allenges challenges** schools to come up with targets which add up to the local authority total, does not help schools to succeed with more pupils. Instead it creates a dynamic in which the centre tries to argue targets up and the locality tries to argue them down – the very opposite of the aspirational^(*) approach we want to see and most schools would naturally follow. So we are ending centralised **target-setting target setting** for schools.

Behaviour, Paragraph 3.3, Page 32:

For parents and the majority of well-behaved pupils, good behaviour in school is important to their future success. Pupils have the right to come to school and focus on their studies, free from disruption and the fear of bullying **and discrimination**.

Behaviour, Paragraph 3.6, Page 32, Point 4:

Expect head teachers to take a strong stand against bullying – particularly prejudice-based racist, sexist, homophobic **and transphobic** bullying.

Behaviour, Paragraph 3.6, Page 33, Point 5:

Focus Ofsted inspections more strongly on behaviour and safety, including bullying, as one of four key areas of inspection.

Introduce a survey and concluding report on LGBT+ bullying and safety in the school environment.

Behaviour, Paragraph 3.19, Page 35:

Teachers, pupils and charities report that prejudice-based bullying in particular is on the increase. It is of course unacceptable for young people to be bullied because of their sexuality or gender identity, yet this happens to two thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils⁴⁶. (vi) Ninety-eight per cent of young gay pupils hear the word 'gay' used as a form of abuse at school, and homophobic bullying is often directed at heterosexual pupils as well⁴⁷. Pupils with Special Educational Needs and disabilities are also more likely to be victims of bullying. Over a three-year period, 81 per cent of pupils with statements of SEN reported being bullied⁴⁸, and bullying specifically relating to their special needs is increasing⁴⁹.

(NB Compulsory languages as part of the English Baccalaureate will increase bullying of those with Special Educational Needs, such as dyslexia. Students with a very high IQ who also suffer from dyslexia often become frustrated with the spelling of other languages and become victims of bullying as a result.)^{vii}

Behaviour, Paragraph 3.20, Page 35:

Schools should take incidents of prejudice-based bullying especially seriously. It is important that they educate children about the differences between different groups of people and create a culture of respect and understanding towards individuality.

St. George's School in Herfordshire takes homophobia extremely seriously.

St George's is a multi-denominational Christian foundation school, educating pupils with diverse religious backgrounds. The school used materials and DVDs from Stonewall to train staff to tackle homophobia. The school always presents anti-homophobic work in the Christian context of treating everyone with respect. Staff are encouraged to take a simple and consistent line of 'we don't treat people like that here'. Where issues of homosexuality arise in lessons, staff have been trained to be confident to manage and challenge inappropriate comments. Older students have also been key in putting forward the case against homophobia in Chapel and school assemblies. As a result, the school has seen a near elimination of overt homophobia. The use of the word 'gay' as a derogatory term has almost disappeared.

Behaviour, Paragraph 3.21, Page 35:

While we will reduce significantly the amount of central guidance given to schools overall, schools rightly look to us for support and guidance on dealing with bullying. Existing anti-bullying guidance is too long and fragmented, so we will rationalise and simplify this from nearly 500 pages to around 20 pages. This will help head teachers to develop an anti-bullying approach for the whole school which protects the most vulnerable. And we will work with non-government organisations such as Stonewall, GRIN Campaign and the Anti-Bullying Alliance to promote best practice and make sure that schools know where to go for support and resource materials.

Behaviour, Paragraph 3.23, Page 36:

Inspectors will be given more time to look for evidence of how well pupils behave, by observing lessons and pupils' conduct around the school. They will also expect schools to demonstrate that the standards of behaviour seen during the inspection are maintained at all times. Inspection will consider whether pupils are and feel safe in school. It is particularly important that pupils are protected and feel safe from all types of bullying in the playground, and corridors and classroom, as well as on the way to and home from school. Inspectors will look for evidence of how much bullying there is in

school and how well it is dealt with. Evidence from pupils and parents will be considered alongside evidence from teachers.

Behaviour, Paragraph 3.27, Page 36:

Effectively promoting good behaviour reduces the number of children causing low-level disruption. Resources can then be focused on those with serious behaviour problems who are perhaps at risk of exclusion and may need additional or specialist support to tackle underlying problems that are causing their bad behaviour. Effective measures to promote good behaviour are well-known to teachers and supported by academic evidence. For example, schools can encourage good behaviour by having clear and simple rules, rewards and sanctions for pupils, encouraging pupils to take responsibility for improving their own behaviour and that of others, providing pastoral support for all pupils not just those who misbehave, and having traditional blazer and tie uniforms, prefects and house systems. ^(viii) To work, approaches have to be implemented consistently and intelligently, led by head teachers who have the freedom to respond to the particular needs of their school.

Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Paragraph 4.6, Page 41, Point 4:

Encourage schools to offer a broad set of academic subjects to age 16, by introducing the English Baccalaureate. ^(vii)

Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Paragraph 4.21, Page 44:

In most European countries school students are expected to pursue a broad and rounded range of academic subjects until the age of 16. Even in those countries such as the Netherlands where students divide between academic and vocational routes all young people are expected, whatever their ultimate destiny, to study a wide range of traditional subjects. So we will introduce a new award – the English Baccalaureate ^(vii) – for any student who secures good GCSE or iGCSE passes in English, mathematics, the sciences, ~~a modern or ancient foreign language and~~ a humanity such as history or geography ~~and a modern or ancient foreign language, unless the student has Special Educational Needs (SEN) which excuse them from taking a language~~. This combination of GCSEs at grades A*-C will entitle the student to a certificate recording their achievement. At the moment only around 15 per cent of students secure this basic suite of academic qualifications and fewer than four per cent of students eligible for free school meals do so⁵⁷. So to encourage the take-up of this combination of subjects we will give special recognition in performance tables to those schools which are helping their pupils to attain this breadth of study.

Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Paragraph 4.23, Page 44:

The proportion of young people studying a modern language at GCSE has fallen from 79 per cent in 2000 to just 44 per cent in 2008 and 2009⁵⁸. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate will encourage many more schools to focus more strongly on ensuring every student has the ~~chance opportunity~~ to pursue foreign language learning to the age of 16. ^(vii)

‘Ultimately, education is the great equaliser. It is the one force that can consistently overcome differences in background, culture and privilege. As the author Ben Wildavsky writes in his new book, *The Great Brain Race*, in the global economy ‘more and more people will have the chance [...] to advance based on what they know rather than who they are.’

Arne Duncan, UNESCO speech

Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Paragraph 4.26, Page 45:

This deficit will be tackled by providing support to increase the number of specialist teachers in physics, chemistry and mathematics and to improve the skills of existing teachers. We need more specialist mathematics teachers in primary schools and will encourage and support schools in developing this **specialism field of study**. We will support schools **which that** offer students the chance to study GCSE physics, chemistry and biology as separate subjects, **or as Triple Science iGCSE**, by exploring how performance tables can reward this raising of aspirations. The teaching of A level further mathematics will be supported by funding initiatives such as the further mathematics support programme. We will also look at ways of supporting the in-depth study of physics. Already other organisations, for example the Physics Factory, are enabling more state school students to enjoy high-quality physics teaching. And we will initiate two new competitions with prizes for the best engineering projects from male and female students in state schools.

Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Paragraph 4.27, Page 45:

There is much of value that children need to learn and experience which sits outside the traditional subject disciplines – the languages, sciences, humanities and mathematics which make up national curricula across the globe. So we will ensure there is **space time** in the school day, and resources for school leaders, to guarantee a truly rounded education for all. **This will include teaching students lessons about equality and to respect diversity, as well as an in depth PHSE curriculum covering aspect of sexuality and gender identity.**

Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Paragraph 4.29, Page 46:

Children need high-quality sex and relationships education so they can make wise and informed choices. We will work with teachers, parents, faith groups and campaign groups, such as Stonewall to make sure sex and relationships education encompasses an understanding of the ways in which humans love each other and stresses the importance of respecting individual autonomy. **We will ensure that education covers not only sexual orientation but also gender identity and expression.**

Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Paragraph 4.30, Page 46:

Children can benefit enormously from high-quality Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education⁶⁰. Good PSHE supports individual young people to make safe and informed choices. It can help tackle public health issues such as substance misuse and support young people with the **financial decisions** they must make. **It should include informative education about the LGBT+ community and give students the knowledge that they need in order to make decisions about their future gender role.** We will conduct an internal review to determine how we can support schools to improve the quality of all PSHE teaching, including giving teachers the flexibility to use their judgement about how best to deliver PSHE education.

Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Paragraph 4.50, Page 49

When young people compete for jobs and enter the workplace, they will be expected to communicate precisely and effectively so we think that changes in the last decade to remove the separate assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar from GCSE mark schemes were **a-mistake questionable**. We have asked Ofqual to advise on how mark schemes could take greater account of the importance of spelling, punctuation and grammar for examinations in **all subjects that are predominately essay based.**^(ix)

Accountability, Paragraph 6.18, Page 69:

The current Ofsted framework inspects schools against 27 headings – many reflecting previous government initiatives. In place of this framework, Ofsted will consult on a new framework with a clear focus on just four things – pupil achievement, the quality of teaching, leadership and management, and the behaviour and safety of pupils. The new inspection framework will help to make sure that there is a better focus on the needs of all pupils, including the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs, ~~and/or~~ disabilities **and the needs of students struggling with their sexuality or gender identity.**

Bullying Experiences and Examples

The following are a collection of stories and quotes from students who have suffered from discrimination based bullying. Due to fear, most of these students said that they have not reported being bullied, and of those that have, they said that they are scared to report it again, because in most situations they are now suffering far greater torment.

One 15 year-old boy said that he had been bullied throughout Primary School and into Secondary School because of being asexual, he described how the other boys would torment him over not being attracted to girls or having a “girl friend”. He says that he has lost confidence in socialising as a result and now tries to get involved with as little as possible in school.

A 14 year-old girl described the time that a group of older girls stole her mobile phone and laughed at her for the choice of pictures on the device. The choice of female instead of male pop star pictures resulted in her constantly being asked, “Are you a lesbian?” and people saying to her, “Oh my God, you’re a lesbian. That’s disgusting!” Although, she had to constantly answer inappropriate questions about her sexuality she never felt she could report the event as her phone was returned to her.

A 16 year-old boy was ostracised by some of the boys in his year group for having slightly longer than normal hair. He suffered exclusion and torment being called “he-she” and other discriminatory names just because he subtly questioned the gender norms.

Dan, a 12 year-old boy was publicly ‘outed’ as gay by one of his closest friends and has since faced constant harassment in the school locker room by his year group after playing football. As a result he has tried to avoid all forms of sport and dropped out of the football team.

One teenage girl described an incident where her extreme dyslexia in a foreign language lesson lead to a teacher publicly humiliating her in front of her peers. As a result the girl quit all languages and has never been able to overcome her fear of learning new things. As a result, instead of choosing subjects that she thought would be interesting for A level, she only chose those that she had been doing since primary school.

One 14 year-old girl spoke of the time that she told her closest friend she was in love with another girl. The friend abandoned her and told her that she was a “freak of

nature.” When the bullying got really bad another girl found out that the bullying had lead to self-harming. She spread rumours that it was only for attention; this led to the bullying getting even worse. The girl was so scared to ask the school for help because she did not know if they would understand homophobic bullying. She did eventually seek help but wishes that she had known earlier that her school would have been supportive of her. She said that she might not have scars on her arms today if she had known that bullying of this type was not tolerated within the school.

Many boys from the ages of 10 to 18 say that daily they have to cope with verbal abuse and even physical threats. “Faggot”, “Gay Boy” and “Queer” are comments that they have to cope with every day.

A 10 year-old girl recalls the time that she suffered such unnoticed verbal abuse at school that it took the kitchen staff complaining to the head master to get anything done about the bullying. She suffered abuse for “not being girly enough” and had to cope with names like “tranny”, “it” and “she-boy”. She said that if she’d told the teachers they would have ignored it or just told her that she should “behave more like a normal girl” as they had in the past.

One parent told us how her young son tried so desperately to fit in. He hid his entire personality to avoid the torment, however, he did not give up his love of music, for which he suffered constant verbal abuse and physical threats. He would try to be the first out of school so that he did not have to face confrontation on the way home or by the school gates.

An 18 year-old boy remembers his RS lessons as a 13-year-old where he was subjected to subtle anti-gay propaganda every lesson. He says that although the teacher was most likely unaware of his sexuality at the time, lessons were “filled with anti-gay slurs and homophobia was embedded into school culture.” He said that, “even when the local town came up in class discussion the teacher would find some story involving the local gay bar and how it was such an odd place, or the people there always treated passers by rudely.” He added that, “the teacher’s attitude is probably why all the students grew to be so hostile.”

Many LGBT+ students have received threatening or abusive messages via text or the Internet and feel like they are being forced to conform to archaic and outdated gender roles whilst in education. Teaching staff and schools are not tolerant enough of individuality and petty rules, such as those regarding hair length, are forcing conformity onto a generation who are already surrounded by constant ideologies of appearance and behaviour from the media.

Notes:

ⁱ Hunt, R and Jensen, J. (2007), *The School Report: the Experiences of Young Gay People in Britain’s Schools, Stonewall*.

ⁱⁱ Engendered Penalties: Transgender and Transsexual People’s Experiences of Inequality and Discrimination

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6239098.stm>

^{iv} Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Question, Gender Queer, Intersex, Asexual and Allie.

^v Aspirational – aspiration or inspirational? Aspirational is technically not a word.

^{vi} (Hunt, R. and Jenson, j. (2007), The School Report: The Experiences of Young Gay People In Britain's Schools, Stonewall).

^{vii} Compulsory languages as part of the English Baccalaureate will increase bullying of those with Special Educational Needs, such as dyslexia. Students with a very high IQ who also suffer from dyslexia often become frustrated with the spelling of other languages and become victims of bullying as a result.

Example: Alice is a student with an IQ above 140, she is the top in her class in many subjects but suffers from extreme dyslexia, and as a result she cannot spell and finds writing in foreign languages very difficult. The other students victimise Alice in her French lessons because her grade is often far below average. The poor grade and torment that Alice is suffering has had an effect on her self-esteem and caused her to lose faith in her academic abilities. Alice is not alone; she is one of many students who will have no way of escaping the trauma if languages become compulsory in schools to fulfil the English Baccalaureate.

^{viii} Traditional uniforms and house systems do encourage discipline, however, they also suppress individuality and draw greater attention to those who do not naturally conform. Example: Bedales School in Hampshire has no uniform and no house system; students are therefore encouraged to respect individuality and thus respect each other, which leads to the promotion of good behaviour.

^{ix} Students that suffer from dyslexia can often experience bullying, which is especially provoked by strong emphasis being placed on languages and spelling