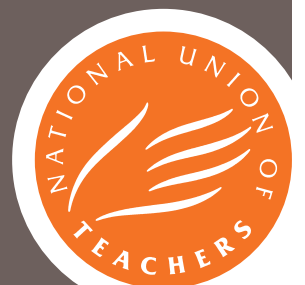




NUT POLICY
STATEMENT ON
**PREVENTING
SEXUAL
HARASSMENT
AND BULLYING**

National
Union
of Teachers



NUT POLICY STATEMENT ON PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

PREFACE

The past ten years have witnessed a growing awareness and an increase in research into bullying in schools. Bullying is now recognised as one of the most destructive social processes that young people can experience in schools, and one of the most difficult challenges for teachers to tackle.

Yet the research literature on bullying, and the Government's education policy, fail to engage with what we know about schools from expert researchers concerned with gender, race, and sexual orientation.

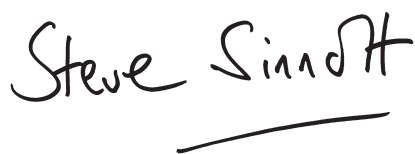
Many school policies on bullying make no reference to gender based or sexualised bullying. Sexual violence and harassment are often absent in definitions of 'bullying'. For this reason, the National Union of Teachers asked teachers, throughout 2006, to share their experiences of sexism, sexual/sexist bullying and sexual harassment.

This policy statement is the result of the feedback from several hundred teachers. They identified that more action was needed by local authorities, school leaders and the Union. Women teachers specifically asked for advice on how to challenge sexist attitudes and sexualised violence.

Sexual bullying, taken in this context to mean a wide range of pupil behaviour extending from name calling to physical sexual assault, undermines the dignity and safety of girls and women learning and teaching in our schools. The institutional pressures on young boys to be stereotypically 'masculine' demand that young men learn to express their 'masculinity' by devaluing all things feminine. If they do not, they are very likely to fall prey to sexist and homophobic bullying.

Supporting schools in preventing the attitudes about men and women which generate sexual harassment is a high priority for the National Union of Teachers. There is much more to be learned about how sexual bullying undermines the learning opportunities and emotional health of all young people, and about which strategies work in practice.

We have an opportunity for change right now in the shape of the Equality Act 2006: the greatest shake up in sex equality laws since 1975. This is an exciting time for equality and the NUT welcomes the new gender equality duty as a powerful tool that can deliver real change. As part of that change, I hope that this statement will raise awareness of the issues which lie at the heart of much bullying of children, young people and teachers.



Steve Sinnott
General Secretary

SEXUAL LANGUAGE AND SEXUAL BULLYING

1. Many children and young people in primary and secondary schools experience sexual bullying, in some schools on a daily basis.¹
2. Sexual harassment and sexual bullying is most often carried out by boys against girls. NUT survey evidence suggests, however, that increasingly girls are also directing sexual abuse at other girls and boys. This language is increasingly used in some primary schools: pupils do not always know what it means or that the terms they are using are derogatory to women.
3. Sexual language and sexual bullying can include explicit sexual remarks, display of sexual material, sexual gestures, unwanted physical attention, comments about sexual reputation or performance or inappropriate touching.
4. Research concludes that girls have little faith in the effectiveness of school behaviour systems in tackling sexual bullying. This is compounded if the girl is not white.
5. The experience of bullying is not confined to children and young people. Teachers and other school staff can experience bullying by other teachers and by young people themselves. Sometimes, this can take the form of sexual bullying; evidence of which was revealed by an NUT survey of teachers.
6. All forms of bullying are unacceptable, whether between children, between adults, or between children and adults. This policy statement sets out the evidence on bullying in schools and describes the issues that need to be tackled. It summarises the legislative requirements and advice available in England and in Wales which can support teachers in tackling sexual bullying.

Girls' and boys' experiences of sexual bullying

7. Research² shows that the range of sexual bullying practices endured by girls is similar to that of boys, but that clearer forms of sexual harassment are evident in schools against girls – particularly boys making frequent unwanted sexual remarks or physical moves against them. Where boys fear being called 'gay', girls are censored by being called 'slag'. The language of girl on girl assaults is also overtly sexual, however, with girls commonly referring to one another's sexual character or sexual appearance.
8. Research in primary schools shows that sexual harassment starts in this phase. This commonly takes the form of boys denigrating girls and women through sexually abusive and aggressive language. An NUT study³ shows that verbal insults predominantly centred around girls' sexual status including terms such as 'bitch', 'slag', 'tart' and 'slut'. Other researchers cite similar evidence⁴. Alarming, these incidents are typically dismissed as playful behaviour or justified through humour.
9. Various secondary school studies document the pervasiveness of sexual harassment experienced by girls and young women in secondary schools.

¹ Presumed Innocence: Heterosexual heterosexist and homophobic harassment among primary ages school girls and boys, Emma Renold, Cardiff University, Childhood, 2002

² Sexual Bullying: Gender Conflict and Pupil Culture in Secondary schools, Neil Duncan, Routledge, 1999

³ A Serious Business: NUT survey of teachers' experiences of sexism and harassment in schools and colleges, Sean Neill, University of Warwick, 2006

⁴ The Great Divide: Gender in the primary school, M Clark, 1990

10. Boys are also subjected to a range of sexual bullying by other boys and by girls. They also experience less obvious forms of attack. The most prevalent issue is sexual verbal abuse and being casually called obscene names. Names which cause most offence to boys are homophobic terms, associated with the 'absence' of high status masculinity.⁵

SEXISM AND SEXIST ATTITUDES

11. As well as being 'sexual' the language and behaviour directed by pupils to each other, and directed at staff, is often sexist. Attitudes and behaviour, as well as language, can be sexist.
12. Sexism is behaviour, language or prejudice which expresses institutionalised, systematic and comprehensive discrimination. It is based on a stereotypical view of masculine and feminine roles. Sexism limits the options of women and girls and can lead to discrimination or less favourable treatment. It is learned behaviour, however, and can therefore be 'unlearned'.

Sexist stereotypes as a cause of bullying

13. In the last 30 years, considerable progress has been made in schools towards understanding barriers to equality between boys and girls. Development of equal opportunities policies, and a greater knowledge of how children engage with learning, have provided the opportunity for schools to challenge stereotypes and prejudice. There are some stereotypes, however, that remain almost impervious to change and continue to have a profound impact.
14. Outdated notions persist about the differences between girls and boys which lead to expectations of different outcomes, achievements and behaviours based on their sex. These notions limit all young people. Stereotypes put pressure on boys and girls to conform to certain notions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. They are a cause of bullying.
15. Often, girls feel they have to decide how far to engage with, or reject, 'girlie' characteristics. Yet, generally, girls do not have the skills to enable them to resist the pressures to conform. Boys feel pressurised to commit to dominant forms of masculinity – in order to attain popularity and escape censure. These expected forms of masculinity include various combinations of football, fighting, girlfriends, sex, anti-gay talk and misogyny.

Links between sexism and homophobia

16. Most researchers conclude that boys use 'sex talk', sexual story-telling, public sexual innuendoes and the objectification of girls to publicly validate their masculinity to their friends, and validate their masculinity to other girls in the class.⁶
17. Girls and boys who actively resist stereotypical masculinities and femininities are often targeted by their peers. Research⁷ shows that young people who fail to conform to 'normal' forms of age appropriate gender behaviour are teased, socially excluded and humiliated by peers, through name-calling, often to a degree to which teachers are unaware because it is not reported.

⁵ Sexual Bullying: Gender Conflict and Pupil Culture in Secondary Schools., Neil Duncan, Routledge, 1999

⁶ The Making of Men: Masculinities, sexualities and schooling, Mac on Ghail M, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1994

⁷ 'They wont let us play...unless you're going out with them' E Renold, BJSE, Vol 27, No 4, Sept 2006

18. Failure for children to conform to expected gender/sexual traits can result in sexist (e.g., 'sissy', 'girl'), or sexual ('tart', 'slag') and/or homophobic ('queer', 'poof', 'lezzie') name-calling and social exclusion. Those young people who systematically fail to conform to stereotypical expectations are subjected to the most sustained forms of sexist bullying and sexualised harassment.⁸
19. Society pressurises boys into defining their heterosexuality through various forms of behaviour such as treating girls as sexual objects and using homophobic taunts against other boys. Homophobic behaviour by boys in schools is as much about confirming their gender as 'real men' as about sexuality or sexual activity. It is important for teachers to appreciate that many of the anti-gay insults directed at boys are used to ridicule and punish behaviour which differs from recognisable 'masculine' traits, rather than to their perceived or actual sexual orientation.

DO TEACHERS EXPERIENCE SEXIST BULLYING AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

20. Sexist and sexual language is common in some schools. Teachers experience various forms of unacceptable pupil behaviour during their careers and this can include sexist language, sexist bullying, sexual language or sexual harassment. Teachers may experience comments about their appearance; sexual remarks; sexual gestures; unwanted physical attention; inappropriate touching or be subject to sexist language and assumptions.
21. An NUT study⁹ carried out in 2006 revealed that two out of every five teachers (39 per cent) had encountered sexist language being directed by pupils to colleagues. Eleven per cent of the sample reported that they had experienced sexual harassment from pupils at some point in their careers and 8 per cent had experienced it in the last 12 months. The study showed that young female members experience disproportionately higher levels of sexual harassment.
22. While teachers may experience this problem to a greater degree in some settings, sexual harassment can happen in any school, large or small, rural or urban, special or mainstream. Making a complaint, however, of sexual harassment or challenging sexual terms used commonly in the classroom can be difficult for teachers. The NUT's study showed that many teachers had tolerated behaviour they found offensive.
23. Some teachers lacked confidence that school leaders would take complaints seriously. They feared also that their capability or competence would be questioned if they reported challenging pupil behaviour. The NUT study revealed that teachers did not report incidents because their school or college took no action to confront sexist language. Teachers sometimes felt powerless and did not have confidence in the reporting system.

⁸ Schooling Innocence: Young children, gender and sexuality, E Renold

⁹ A Serious Business: NUT survey of teachers' experiences in and outside the classroom of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual assault in schools and colleges, Sean Neill, University of Warwick, 2006

24. Teachers reported that unconscious sexism needed to be tackled.

“On discussing different sports, one ‘cocky’ boy of 9 years old told me that I shouldn’t do Judo because it’s a boys’ sport. We followed his comment with lots more ‘enlightening’ discussion and excellent writing after further research. He had challenged girls in the football team already and the deputy head was ‘talking to him’.”

Young people may inherently have ideas of traditional roles, e.g. police are always men, cooks always women. They can use this in the classroom especially in role play situations...[!] explain how traditional ideas/roles can be/have been changed.”

(Female teachers working in a primary school)

25. Nevertheless, the survey found that teachers sometimes suffered explicit and conscious verbal abuse.

“Particular pupil making sexual comments about me and my appearance. The pupil would make out it was done in ‘jest’ but these comments made me feel very uncomfortable and embarrassed to deal with him in the classroom.”

(Female teacher working in a secondary school)

“Walking past a group of Yr10 boys to hear ‘is that the teacher you had in the cupboard?’ Recently joined my first school, group of 6th form boys began wolf whistling and hissing at me then a few, maybe three shouted ‘I’ll do ya!’.”

(Female teacher working in a secondary school)

“Most significantly pupils directed sexist abuse at one another both in and out of lessons, particularly abusive name calling / inappropriate use of body language and taunts which are sexual in nature. Have had inappropriate sexual remarks made by both genders.”

(Female teacher working in a primary school)

26. Staff teaching pupils with emotional, social or behavioural difficulties, in pupil referral units or in special schools reported encountering sexist language and sexual harassment more frequently than colleagues in mainstream settings. Pupils with behaviour difficulties used inappropriate and unacceptable language and behaviour of all types in order to distract staff or when they were being challenged about their behaviour.

“Working in a PRU, you anticipate verbal abuse but it seems to be more and more a part of our day to day working life. Some can be desensitised to it, but at times of stress it is demoralising and hurtful. Staff have walked into a room to fetch a chair, book, etc, and come out totally distressed at the torrent of abuse. Police have visited our unit and heard pupils speak to teachers in such a way that they had said that if they had been as verbally abusive in the street they would have been arrested for Public Order offences.”

(Female teacher, PRU)

BUILDING THE CASE FOR CHANGE

27. The case for governing bodies and head teachers acting to prevent sexual harassment of staff.

- **Sexual harassment can damage school effectiveness.** Teachers experiencing harassment from pupils or colleagues are likely to under perform as a direct result of stress and loss of self-esteem. Schools will lose good teachers and particularly young women teachers if sexual harassment makes their workplace an intimidating or threatening environment.
- **Good employers actively promote a positive working environment.** They recognise staff are one of their main assets and make sure that everyone in their school can do their job in a positive atmosphere free from sex discrimination.
- **Sexual harassment can cost money.** Employers can be held to be liable for the unlawful actions of their staff, whether or not their actions are known, and employers can be liable for what happens to agency workers. Claims can include compensation for personal injury. The publicity associated with tribunal claims can harm a school's image. Prevention is cheaper.
- **From 30 April 2007, governing bodies in England and Wales are under a legal obligation to publish a Gender Equality Scheme.** Schemes must show how the governing body will meet its duties under the SDA 1975 (as amended by the Equality Act 2006) to have due regard, when carrying out all the functions of the school, to eliminating unlawful sex discrimination and harassment of teachers; and to promoting equality of opportunity between men and women teachers.

28. The case for governing bodies and head teachers acting to prevent sexual harassment of pupils.

- **Schools are under a duty to make educational provision free of sex discrimination.** Girls and boys are entitled to educational provision free of sex discrimination. Section 25 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 places local authorities and governing bodies in England and Wales under this legal duty.
- **In England, Every Child Matters** requires schools to work with other agencies to promote 5 outcomes including these aims: children and young people are sexually healthy; children and young people are safe from violence and sexual exploitation; children and young people develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate; children and young people achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation.
- **Sexual harassment and bullying is unacceptable pupil behaviour.** The DfES guidance on preventing bullying 'Safe to Learn' says "*these measures need to deal with preventing all forms of bullying including bullying related to gender*". The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 places a duty on head teachers in England and Wales to, "*encourage good behaviour and respect for others... and in particular prevent all forms of bullying among pupils*". Head teachers are legally required to ensure that the measures in their anti-bullying policies promote respect, prevent bullying and regulate good behaviour at the school.

- **OFSTED inspectors will report on levels of sexist and sexual bullying.** The 'Framework for the inspection of schools in England: September 2005' places increased and sharper emphasis on educational inclusion. In determining their judgements, inspectors are required to discuss with young people whether they feel safe from bullying and other forms of harassment and are confident in approaching staff if they feel troubled. Inspectors must judge the school leadership and management by asking: *"How well is equality of opportunity promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can?"*
 - **Gender Equality schemes must** show how schools are working towards eliminating unlawful sex discrimination and harassment. The new duty in the Equality Act 2006 requires schools in England and Wales to be proactive in eliminating discrimination and harassment experienced by pupils, rather than waiting for individual young people to complain of bullying. In order to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2006, schools need to be proactive in promoting equality of opportunity.
29. Specific advice issued by the DfES related to the Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that all schools should:
- regularly make clear to pupils, parents and staff, that bullying, harassment and oppressive behaviour in any form is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated;
 - ensure that bullying, harassment and oppressive behaviour is punished; and
 - use the DfES Anti-Bullying Charter to involve pupils in creating systems to support each other using strategies such as restorative justice or 'buddying' and 'befriending' systems.

GUIDANCE PUBLISHED BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT (WAG)

30. The Anti Bullying guidance produced by the Welsh Assembly Government, 'Respecting Others' (2003), recognises that sexual bullying impacts on both genders.
31. The WAG guidance says:
- "A case of proven sexual assault is likely to lead to the exclusion of the perpetrator. However, where the perpetrators are young children, this form of bullying may indicate particular problems. In general, sexual bullying is characterised by:*
- *abusive name calling;*
 - *looks and comments about appearance, attractiveness, emerging puberty;*
 - *inappropriate and uninvited touching;*
 - *sexual innuendoes and propositions;*
 - *pornographic material, graffiti with sexual content; and*
 - *in its most extreme form sexual assault or rape."*

32. The Anti Bullying guidance produced by the Welsh Assembly Government, 'Respecting Others' (2003), recognises the existence of sexist bullying which it describes as, "where a boy or a girl is targeted if they step outside traditional gender stereotypes or boundaries".

33. The WAG guidance says:

"Although there is no single way of becoming a girl or a boy, research has shown that children will punish those that do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes. For example, boys can receive gendered insults like 'sissy' or 'girl' and sometimes physical threats or attacks if they do not want to play football or rugby and/or if they are quiet, studious and pro-school."

GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMMES: A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

34. Section 25 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies in England and Wales to make educational provision which is free of sex discrimination.

35. The Gender Equality Duty comes into force in April 2007. All local authorities and schools must produce schemes which outline their strategies for eliminating sexual discrimination. Schools are required to consult pupils and parents and take into account the information gathered when developing Gender Equality Schemes.

36. Any specific strategy to develop such provision should be integrated within a whole-school approach to gender equality which focuses on gender relations between girls and boys.

37. To make any sustainable inroads into pupils' ideas of identity, education research has shown that whole school policies are needed. One respected researcher in this field, Christine Skelton¹⁰ suggests that a whole school approach should not be a checklist of things to do in the classroom but should be based on the questions set out below:

- What images of masculinity and femininity are pupils bringing with them into school and what types are they acting out in the classroom and the playground?
- What are the dominant images of masculinity and femininity that the school itself reflects to the pupils?
- What kind of role models does the school want and expect of its teachers?
- What kinds of initiatives/strategies/projects should teachers be undertaking with children to question gender categories?

¹⁰ Schooling the boys: Masculinities and Primary Education, Buckingham Open University Press, 2001 C. Skelton

38. A range of actions are open to schools, therefore, in tackling sexual and sexist bullying. They can include:
- clear and effective pupil support systems including confidential and varied routes to report bullying;
 - the curricular opportunities to develop personal, social and emotional skills;
 - the development of awareness by pupils of the roles they can play as an 'outsider' or 'defender' in group bullying;
 - the development of clear strategies for the engagement of parents; and
 - working with local authority children's services to ensure that pupil safeguarding is a high priority.

Where members identify incidences of sexual bullying or harassment in their school, talking to their line managers and/or, if necessary, the head teacher, is the first step to take.

There may be circumstances, however, where members feel that they are unable or cannot resolve such situations within their school. If that is the case, members should seek advice from their regional office or in Wales, NUT Cymru.

BREAKING DOWN THE MYTHS

Myth 1: Girls are achieving better results than ever before. Sexist stereotypes don't do any damage in my school.

Women constitute half the working population in Britain and yet the gap between men's and women's earnings is widening despite the fact that girls perform better than boys in public examinations. 55 per cent of girls gain five or more A-C grades at GCSE compared with 44 per cent of boys.

Women over 21 have had the right to vote since 1928 and yet only 27 per cent of local authority councillors are women, 18 per cent of all MPs and 24 per cent of MEPs are women. In the home, up to one in 10 women experience domestic violence each year, one in four will experience this type of abuse at some point in their lifetime. An incident of domestic violence takes place in Britain every six to 20 seconds.

The barriers faced by women are consistently denied or trivialised by the media and can be ignored within workplaces. The Government claims that they have made great progress to equalise opportunity for women – the facts do not bear this out. Women's jobs are undervalued and there are many factors, from school to the workplace, contributing to the gender pay gap in the UK.

A report by the Women & Work Commission in 2006, 'Shaping a Fairer Future' concluded:

"Much of the unfavourable stereotyping of women and their abilities has been swept away. But many girls and young women are still following traditional routes in education and training and being paid less than men. Just three years after graduating, women earn 15 per cent less than their male counterparts. A culture change is needed in order to challenge assumptions about the types of jobs women and men can do. We believe that if girls are made more aware of the consequences of their choices for their future pay and career progression they might make different choices".

Myth 2: Pupils will always make sexual comments about teachers and their appearance. This is the way young boys behave. They will grow out of it so there is no need to worry.

Sexist language and bullying needs to be challenged as does homophobic and racist behaviour. Teachers would not expect young people to 'grow out' of racist behaviour or beliefs. It is equally important to challenge sexism.

Sexual harassment is often excused if it is by male pupils, as some teachers may think 'boys will be boys' and that there is no need to challenge sexual language and inappropriate behaviour. Employers however (either the governors or the LEA) are obliged to take reasonable steps to prevent and deal with any sexual harassment by any pupil, whether that pupil is male or female.

Another excuse often given is: 'all the pupils do it'. This is no defence, and the fact that the majority of the pupils in the school use sexual language does not mean that it is okay; some teachers may not object, but that does not make it unreasonable for some teachers to decide to do something about it.

If sexist behaviour, languages and attitudes are not challenged at primary level, it becomes harder to do so in secondary. Sexist assumptions can lead to sexual bullying.

Classroom work that focuses on gender stereotyping, self esteem, violence prevention, confidence building, sexual health, relationships, sexism and assertiveness are all vital ingredients to raising girls' aspirations and challenging girl on girl bullying and bullying by boys. This is also vital for building boys' emotional literacy and releasing boys from restrictive stereotypes about how to behave.

Sexual harassment, similar to racism, is learned social behaviour that can be un-learned. Seek support from colleagues for introducing whole school prevention programmes to induce long term changes in attitudes and behaviours. Schools will need to raise awareness with teachers and parents about why this is necessary. One off lessons will not suffice.

Myth 3: Teachers have to learn to cope with behaviour such as abusive name calling or wolf whistling and sexual comments. It's part of the job. You'll never stamp out words like 'slag' or 'bitch'.

Unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature including such comments can count as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is often dismissed as 'just a bit of fun' or 'a bit of harmless flirting'. In reality, behaviour such as this is sexual harassment and prolonged harassment can lead to serious health problems for staff, including anxiety or depression. Equally bullying has an impact on pupil self esteem and teaching and learning.

Staff should not have to put up with sexist or sexual behaviour. Suggestive remarks and comments about teachers' sex lives by pupils; and unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that creates an environment which is intimidating may count as sexual harassment and should be taken seriously by employers.

More experienced female colleagues may have tips and tools of the trade for how they respond to such language: they can provide advice to new staff or to supply teachers.

The curriculum, including PSHE and Citizenship, can be used to help foster appropriate and responsible interaction between pupils and to deter sexual bullying and harassment, including of staff. Young people seize on the chance to discuss such issues if given the chance.

Myth 4: Women teachers are less authoritative and female teachers will experience more problems with pupil behaviour.

Girls and boys are treated differently from birth and are socialised by experiencing different language, dress, play, expectations and behaviours. This effects the learning process. Before girls and boys leave the nursery stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity are already absorbed.¹¹

¹¹ The Invisible Dimension, The City of Liverpool, 2001

The traditional view of masculinity includes toughness, dominance, independence, eagerness to fight and repression of empathy. The corresponding view of females is that they are weak, non aggressive, kind, caring and passive. The socialisation of boys has increasingly encouraged the above concept of masculinity-instead of moving away from it. Therefore, students can acquire stereotypical views about men and women which are based on what they have heard from parents or the media.

Women, as a whole, however, are not all passive, unselfish, non career minded; just as men, as a whole, are not all active, ambitious and aggressive. Individual men and women vary greatly in their characteristics and behaviours. There is no typical male teacher or female teacher. All teachers are individuals. All students are individuals.

Gender stereotyping can limit life expectations and experiences for men and women as young people internalise myths to a greater or lesser degree. Schools need to recognise this. It is important to challenge gender myths about male or female teachers and their capabilities whether they are voiced by pupils in the classroom or playground.

It is important for women teachers to be aware that there is no truth to claims in the press that the dearth of men teachers “damages children’s education, equal opportunities, and society in general”¹². The academic evidence available does not support this view. The quality of teaching and learning in education is of the utmost importance but it does not hinge upon the gender of teachers. Despite assertions to the opposite, the presence of men teachers has no direct or significant impact on boys’ attitudes to school, their behaviour or their academic achievements.¹³

The perception that the achievements and behaviour of boys will improve if they are taught by men is false and is not based on hard facts. Education research overall does not support the view that more men in schools leads to an improvement in boys’ behaviour.

Men as teachers are in a good position to challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Men generally continue to occupy more powerful positions in society than women and it is important that the reasons for this are discussed within Citizenship and PSHE lessons.

Myth 5: Male teachers cannot be harassed.

It is not only women who are subject to sexual harassment. Male teachers can experience sexual harassment, either from pupils or colleagues. NUT research suggests that a common tool used by pupils to embarrass staff is questioning the sexual orientation of teachers, especially if teachers do not appear to be married.

Male teachers can experience unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature from pupils. It is important that school policies protect all teachers and involve all members of staff in challenging stereotypes.

Some male teachers are subject to false or malicious accusations of inappropriate touching for example when sitting next to female students to help them. The most common reasons give in the academic literature for why men don’t teach is the labelling of all male primary teachers as homosexual or not ‘real men’: the fear of being labelled a paedophile; and the current media spotlight on allegations of child abuse.

¹¹ TES editorial, 2002

¹² Missing Men in Education, Mary Thornton, Patricia Bricheno, Trentham Books, 2006

Myth 6: There is nothing wrong with pupils using the word 'gay' or 'lesbo' to mean something negative. The pupils don't know it means anything to do with sexual orientation.

Homophobic bullying and sexual harassment are linked. Schools cannot successfully address one in isolation without acknowledging the other. Boys question each others sexual orientation to prove that they are behaving in the way expected of boys by society. Primary and secondary schools must challenge homophobia. Lesbian, gay and bisexual staff have the legal right to be open about their sexual orientation, but cannot do so in practice if homophobic school cultures are not tackled.

Use of the word 'gay' and 'lesbian' negatively as a form of insult or abuse is homophobic bullying. See the NUT guidance on '*Tackling Homophobic Bullying*' at www.teachers.org.uk for strategies for challenging this specific type of prejudice. LGB teachers have the right to equal treatment and to be 'out' to students. Specific advice on the rights of LGBT staff is also on the NUT website, called '*Negotiating For Equality*'. These rights are contained in the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003.

Schools need to tackle the issues of homophobic and sexist and sexual bullying together as the causes of these forms of behaviour by pupils are inter linked. This will be much more effective than dealing with one but not the other.

FURTHER READING

Educating the Other: Gender, Power and Schooling, Carrie Paechter, Falmer Press, 1998

Sexual Bullying: Gender Conflict and pupil culture in secondary schools, Neil Duncan, Routledge, 1999

Sexual Harassment in Schools: A Guide for Teachers, Carrie Herbert, David Fulton, 1992

Rethinking gender in early childhood education, G. MacNaughton, Paul Chapman, 2000

Schooling the Boys: Masculinities and Primary Education, Christine Skelton, Open University Press, 2001

FURTHER RESOURCES

Addressing Healthy Relationships and Sexual Exploitation within PSHE in Schools, Sex Education Forum, Fact Sheet 37

Respecting Others: Anti-Bullying Guidance, National Assembly for Wales Circular No: 23/2003 (2003)

The Invisible Dimension: Violence Prevention Education Teachers' Handbook, Liverpool Education Authority (2001)

Safe and Sound: a Resource Manual for working with children who have experienced domestic violence, Women's Aid

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.dysgu.cymru.gov.uk

www.learning.wales.gov.uk

www.womensaid.org.uk/

www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk/

www.womankind.org.uk

www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk

www.eoc.org.uk

www.amnesty.org.uk/

OTHER NUT PUBLICATIONS (AVAILABLE FROM NUT HEADQUARTERS)

- Silence is Not Always Golden: Tackling Domestic Violence
- Anti Racist curriculum guidelines
- Tackling homophobic bullying
- Negotiating for equality: supporting LGBT members
- Harassment and Bullying of Teachers; Guidance for members, school representatives and health and safety representatives
- The Muslim Faith and School Uniform: wearing the hijab and other Islamic dress in schools



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