



A Teacher's Guide To Surviving Anti-Gay Harassment

The following has been adapted for use by GALYIC (UK) <http://www.galyic.org.uk>
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If the offender(s) are pupils:

- Try to get the class back on task. ("We have a rule about 'no put downs.' So cut it out and let's get back to ..." "I've been hearing murmured comments from the back of the room and I don't appreciate them. Can we please focus on the ...?")
- If that doesn't quell the comments, get specific. ("That is a really mean thing to say. I don't let you call each *other* names and I won't let you call *me* names either. Whether or not I am gay, I don't deserve that." "My sexual orientation is not up for discussion. Besides, that's a really derogatory term. Repeating it when I've already asked you to cut it out is called *malicious harassment*. It's against school policy and it's against the law.")
- If necessary, use the same disciplinary procedures you would use if a student directed a religious or racial slur or a gender-based comment at another pupil.

If the offender(s) are adults:

- Tell them in no uncertain terms that you are offended and you expect the behaviour to stop.
- If that doesn't work, write them a letter specifying what they have done that you consider harassing and that you want it to stop. Keep a copy.

If the problem is offensive graffiti or other damage to property:

- *Do not clean it* until others have witnessed it and (ideally) photographed it, as difficult as that may be.

Ask for protection:

- The earlier you get help, the better. Talk with your manager about:
 - what happened and what you have *already* done (if anything) to get the offender(s) to stop harassing you.
 - how you would most like the investigation handled, if one is needed.
 - what might be done to counsel or educate the offender(s) about malicious harassment and why it isn't tolerated at school.
 - what sorts of reprimand or discipline would be employed if it were another form of malicious harassment (based on race, religion, or gender, for instance) and that you would like this problem handled equitably.
 - how possible retaliation (for your having sought help) will be handled.
- If that doesn't work, ask *their* manager for help. Use the appropriate channels in your building/district.
- If you belong to a union, keep them informed, even if you have no need for their help at this time.

Talk with supportive colleagues.

- If you know sexual minority or gay-supportive employees in your district, ask if they are experiencing similar harassment. Find out how they have handled it and who has been helpful on a district level.

- Check with your professional association or union. Many are prepared to support their members, regardless of sexual orientation.
- Contact GALYIC: **01422.320099**.
- Contact Victim Support: **01422.344742** for emotional and practical support to victims of crime, including murder, rape, homophobic and racist incidents and indirect victims, e.g. family members, supporting children, etc.
- Consult with Schools Out which provides a formal and informal support network for LGBT people in education (www.schools-out.org.uk **0207.635.0476**)
- Contact GALOP (An LGB anti-violence and police monitoring project): **0207.704.2040**.

Keep a written record:

- Write down everything that led *up* to the harassing incident(s) as well as what was said and done *during* the incidents. Note the time, location and who was involved (including witnesses).
- Write down the names of those in whom you have confided or from whom you have sought help *since* the incident. Note the time, location and what was said during those conversations.

The law may be able to help.

- You can report a homophobic hate incident to the Hate Crime Office, P.C. Ian Firth, **01422.318152**.
- Call as soon as possible after the incident. (You can make a report months or even years afterwards, but it might be harder for the police to act on your case the longer you wait.)
- If anti-gay slurs were used in the course of the incident, tell the police officer that the crime (or one of the crimes) you are reporting is a "*homophobic hate incident*." Stress that the crime was motivated by hate based on perceived sexual orientation. You don't have to say whether you are actually gay and you shouldn't be asked.
- Describe *in detail* the hate or prejudice that was expressed and what caused you to fear harm. For example, "*They called me 'faggot' and said they would 'kick my butt'.*" Or, "*They called me 'lesbo' and said I shouldn't be teaching in schools.*" If the assault was physical and you have any physical pain, make sure it is written down in the police report. Get the incident number from the officer and ask how to get a copy of the police report. Get the officer's name and number.

If necessary, you can also:

- Make a complaint about the way your school is responding by utilising the school's complaints procedure. If you are not happy with the response, contact the Group Director, Schools and Children's Service to see what help they can provide and finally, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. Of course, you can also contact your local M.P.
- Contact a lawyer about bringing a "civil case" against the offenders: Victimisation and harassment are illegal (The Prevention of Harassment Act 1997). The local authority may be taken to court for not doing "all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area." (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 17). If the Equality Bill is passed in Parliament, attacking or threatening a person or damaging their property because of their sexual orientation, race, religion, gender, disabilities, etc., will become illegal.
- As from December 2003 it will be illegal in Britain to discriminate against anyone in employment on the grounds of sexual orientation.
- Contact LAGER (Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights): **0207.704.8066** (women) **0207.704.6066** (men) for more information.
- It is likely that in 2006 there will be an Equality Commission which deals with all aspects of equality. When this has been established, contact them for advice.

The bottom line is ...

If the school environment is hostile for you, it must be even *more* so for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pupils and for children with sexual minority parents. Probably *every* child is feeling scared or anxious as long as the behaviour is allowed to continue. Fear is not conducive to education.

Nobody can teach in an unsafe place. And nobody can learn in an unsafe place.

The original Safe Schools Coalition version of this handout is online at:
http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/guide_educator_surviveharass.pdf