

"Valuing All God's Children: Guidance for Church of England Schools on Challenging Homophobic Bullying."

In May the Archbishop of Canterbury launched a most timely, useful and informative report from the Education Division of the Church of England *"Valuing All God's Children: Guidance for Church of England Schools on Challenging Homophobic Bullying."*

The guidance provides 10 key recommendations which should be adopted by schools in combating homophobic bullying. One of the most useful sections for schools are several sample policies for primary and secondary Church schools. The policies include anti – bullying, behaviour and equality in addition to several practical guidance top tips including referral forms and most importantly monitoring forms. Published by the Church Of England Archbishop's Council Education Division, the guidance involved consultation and involvement with a number of Church of England schools with existing good practice.

Speaking at a Church of England Secondary School, at Trinity Lewisham, The Right Reverend Justin Welby said that the publication of the guidance fulfilled a pledge he made last July when addressing the Church of England's General Synod.

"Less than a year ago I set out my concerns about the terrible impact of homophobic bullying on the lives of young people and I made a public commitment to support our schools in eradicating homophobic stereotyping and bullying.

"Since then an enormous amount of work has gone into producing this guidance so that commitment can be turned into action. I am extremely grateful to all those who have worked so hard to produce it and I particularly want to thank the schools and young people who have contributed.

"Church schools begin from the belief that every child is loved by God. This guidance aims to help schools express God's love by ensuring that they offer a safe and welcoming place for all God's children. This is a task we are called to share and I know it is one our schools take immensely seriously. I commend this guidance as a contribution to that work."

In his address to the Church of England's General Synod in July 2013, the Archbishop said:

"With nearly a million children educated in our schools we not only must demonstrate a profound commitment to stamp out such stereotyping and bullying; but we must also take action. We are therefore developing a programme for use in our schools, taking the best advice we can find anywhere, that specifically targets such bullying. More than that, we need also to ensure that what we do and say in this Synod, as we debate these issues, demonstrates above all the lavish love of God to all of us."

The Guidance notes that the purpose of schools is to educate and the aim of this guidance is to protect pupils in Church of England schools from having their self-worth diminished and their ability to achieve impeded by being bullied because of their perceived/actual sexual orientation: "Church schools are places where boundaries should be strong, where any harmful words or actions are known to be unacceptable, and where there are clear strategies for recognising bullying and dealing with it in a framework of forgiveness and restorative justice. Children and young people in Church of England schools should be able to grow freely and to be comfortable and confident within their own skins without fear or prejudice." (paragraph 19 of Guidance document)

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1988293/valuing%20all%20god%27s%20children%20web%20final.pdf>

