



### Celebrating difference Case Study Form

**Name:** Judith Beardsworth

**Title:** Headteacher

**School:** Hemblington Primary. Tel: 01603-713243 Fax: 01603-716994  
[office@hemblington.norfolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@hemblington.norfolk.sch.uk)

**Age of children/young people:** Reception to Year 6

**Brief Description of Challenging Homophobia work:** An incident in the playground led to school staff recognising there was some work to be done on challenging homophobic language and celebrating difference within the school. Following attendance at the Celebrating Difference course, the school joined Stonewall School's Champion programme and the Head put in curricular resources on different families as well as encouraging children to challenge homophobic language. Since then there have been no further reported instances of homophobic language. Please see full details below and get in touch with the school for further details.

*I am looking for case studies which show how training I have organised on Celebrating Difference and Challenging Homophobia has been used to change practice in schools/organisations working with children/young people in Norfolk. Your case study can focus on any area of practice and should give as much information as possible to make it useful for other schools/organisations to learn from. Areas you could consider are:*

*Changing policy/guidance to staff*

*Engaging staff*

*Introducing curricular work*

*Engaging young people, their families*

*Specific areas such as challenging homophobic language, addressing sex education, providing young people with relevant information etc*

*Overcoming barriers*

*Please return to Rita Adair  
Senior Lead Educational Psychologist  
[rita.adair@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:rita.adair@norfolk.gov.uk)*

*Children's Services  
Carrow House  
117 King's Street  
Norwich*

### Case Study – Hemblington Primary

Hemblington Primary School is located in a semi-rural position about 8 miles outside Norwich. It is a relatively small school with a slightly lower than average number of SEND children; there is a lower than average deprivation factor in the area, but the actuality of the situation in school is masked by the fact that a number of children come from outside the catchment area and many live just above the 'free school meals' standard.

Until the academic year 2013-4, the school had had mixed age classes (usually 6, but sometimes fewer), and in September 2013 moved to a one form entry set up. The teaching staff is very stable and experienced, with excellent behaviour management skills; the school was rated 'Good' at its last Ofsted in March 2012 and has since moved on considerably. Rates of poor behaviour and bullying are generally very low, and there have been no exclusions for several years.

Bearing the details above in mind, it came to my attention that there was more homophobic language being used in school than was at first obvious. Staff almost never heard the use of such language, and were reasonably happy to challenge it, but in Spring 2013 an incident occurred between some Y5 and 6 boys which gave rise to the thought that the casual use of the word 'gay' as term of abuse or insult, and its use to 'wind each other up' was definitely occurring. This, and the increasing focus from external reviewers on how schools tackle homophobia, and the desire to improve my own skills in the area (and ensure my responses to the use of homophobic language were the best possible choices) made me book onto the 'Celebrating Difference' course. I felt we needed to know the best ways to talk to children about the inappropriate use of the term gay, and yet to ensure that it was not demonised.

I found the course very inspiring and helpful; it reassured me that the way we had been talking to children was the right one, but also that there was much more to be done. As head teacher, I felt empowered to act quickly, as although I do not have the opportunity to use a great deal of curriculum time to influence children's behaviour (I only teach a Y1 class for one morning), I can set a tone and ethos through assemblies, displays, one off lessons etc and by my general approach to behaviour management. Immediately, I informed staff and governors of the need to tackle this issue; agreement was reached. We joined Stonewall, and, wanting to make sure parents were completely aware of what was happening, I informed them of our membership in the regular newsletter, and the fact that we had purchased a selection of 'inclusive' books for use in the classroom – I was clear we were about making the school inclusive and celebrating difference.

There was some response to this from parents; several openly applauded our decision and spoke to me in the playground. We have a small but significant group of Brethren children in school until the end of Y2, when they join their own school in Swaffham, and these parents made appointments to see me to discuss the implications of what was happening. At these meetings, we talked about inclusivity and the fact that celebrating difference was not about discussing sex, proselytising for any particular stance or rejecting any other family style, but about making sure all children felt welcome, whatever the shape of their families and acknowledging friendship and love can take a variety of forms. I stress this was about overcoming prejudice in all its forms. This was accepted and no further concerns have been raised.

A good number of 'Different Family, Same Love' posters were put up around the school and aroused some interest with the children. Many books were purchased and made available to use just as story books or for PSHE teaching. In assembly, I began to use inclusive images featuring gay couples – without making a comment on this (for example, in an assembly featuring trust as the theme, some images of marriage showed a man and a woman getting married and a wedding cake with two men on the top); inclusivity should be just part of the scenery.

Using the 'Stonewall' Video, I held a training for all staff, including MSAs and TAs, to ensure they were confident to deal with the mis-use of the word gay. We discussed how we should always challenge the derogatory use of such terms. The resources were discussed, and it was made clear that strong support from the SMT would be forthcoming if required. No one would ignore homophobic language. I also spoke to all sports coaches and those running after school clubs to make sure they knew our tough stance on homophobic language.

By this time, many books were being used in class, and we introduced a new PSHE curriculum in September 2013 which included resources gained at the Challenging Homophobia course. William's Doll, The Paper Bag Princess, It's a George Thing, King and King and many more. By this time, I had also worked with Stonewall to look at what we were already doing and draw up an action plan to develop our work. Policies were updated to ensure that homosexuality was included in protected characteristics and specific mention of an anti homophobic stance was included where required. Our information gathering sheets on behaviour were updated to include the collection of specific data on homophobic bullying and language. The new school year was started with an assembly based on the book Beegu, and a display mounted in the entrance hall to reflect this: In our school, everyone is welcome. This was only a temporary display, and it has now been replaced by one that came out of an assembly in Anti Bullying Week based on Our House, again, stressing that 'Everyone is welcome' and making explicit reference to gay people (as well as many others!). All teachers did some explicit work with children during anti bullying week, and Y6 took part in the Norfolk anti bullying survey.

As part of the Stonewall action plan, my assistant head and I let an assembly to undertake a survey of Y4,5,6 children about how prevalent the use of homophobic language was in the school. We discussed how and why the use of terms like gay in a derogatory way is offensive and similar to racist language, and I shared with the children the fact my sister is gay and so the use of such language could hurt my feelings (I had previously talked to the last year's Y5/6 class about this when dealing with the original incident). The children were very mature and filled in the survey sensibly. Analysis showed it was only a small group of children who regularly heard this type of language in school (although many heard it out of school) and when we held a second assembly to share the results of the survey, I asked the children what they thought this meant. Immediately, they said that it must be just a small group using this language, and when I asked what we could do about it I was delighted when a Y6 girl responded, 'Tell them not to say it if we hear it!' This was very gratifying as we want to move the agenda on to children dealing with bullying etc by themselves where possible – 'standing by' others rather than being bystanders.

In addition, this term we have put up a new notice board to celebrate family events in our community; my sister is getting married soon, so I will be putting that on the board! We are planning to celebrate LGBT Month by looking at famous people who are gay (the focus being on the fame, as we want to treat being gay as just part of who they are) as well as holding another inclusive assembly focusing on different types of family. I also think we will be joining the Norfolk against hate campaign.

Since we have begun this initiative, we have had no reported incidents of either homophobic language or bullying; we aim to keep this issue ticking over by regular reference to it and by regular higher profile assemblies or discussions in class.