

The most successful interventions are those embedded within a positive ethos and culture. Practitioners can support children and young people in responding to bullying by role modelling what is acceptable and taking the time to allow a child to understand the effects of certain language.

RESPONDING TO 'THAT'S SO GAY' – CREATING UNDERSTANDING IN PRIMARY SETTINGS

STEP ONE – LEARNING: EXPLAIN WHAT IT MEANS

“The word gay is used to describe a boy who loves another boy or girl who love another girl, not to mean something is bad or that you don't like it.”

STEP TWO – EMPATHY: EXPLAIN THE IMPACT ON LGBT PEOPLE

“What message do you think gay people might hear when you use the word like this? What about kids who have 2 mums or 2 dads or family members who are gay? How might it make them feel?”

STEP THREE – CREATE BOUNDARIES

Set up the boundaries: explain the anti-bullying policy, what is not tolerated, and the possible consequences.

RESPONSES TO 'THAT'S SO GAY'

Although young learners might not know what they are saying or what the word means, they are learning there is a connection between the word 'gay' and 'bad' or 'rubbish'. Be clear that is unacceptable and has a negative impact when used to mean something is bad. You could say:

“Using the word 'gay' to tease someone is bullying and is unacceptable. If it happens again I will report it as bullying.”

“You may not have meant to be hurtful, but when you use the word 'gay' to mean something is bad or stupid, it is hurtful.”

Follow-up: “Do you know why it is hurtful?”

“Do you know what 'gay' means?”

“It's not OK to use 'gay' to mean something is bad.” **Follow-up:** “Do you know why?”

“Remember, we don't use put-downs in this class.”

“Even if you didn't mean to offend people who are gay, it is offensive to call this task gay; if you don't like something, then say you don't like it.”

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