



# Including and valuing ALL children

## What do we teach about LGBTQ Relationships?

At Briary we use Jigsaw to teach PSHE. Jigsaw, the mindful approach to PSHE, is a curriculum resource for Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) written as an easy to use lesson-a-week programme for pupils aged from 3-16. This information leaflet has been written to provide you, as parents and carers, with information about the LGBTQ content of the Jigsaw materials.

### Why include teaching about LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning) issues at Briary?

#### 1) Ensuring all children feel included

School (and wider society) is a place where all children should feel safe and respected. There are a variety of family situations in British society; some children will have parents who are separated, some may live with a mum and a dad, some may have step-parents, and some may be fostered or adopted. Some may have other family arrangements; and some will have LGBTQ parents or other LGBTQ family members. Any child who lives in a family that is different from the stereotypical household of mum, dad, and children should not be made to feel less accepted, or that their family is any less loving and caring. Teachers would, of course, not set out to do this. However, if the only model of family life that is included in curriculum resources is that of mum, dad and children, what are the 'hidden messages' for children with families who sit outside of this pattern? Is my family not right or acceptable? Am I not acceptable? Should I not talk about my family? Will people pick on me because my family is 'different'? Children who feel unaccepted or isolated are more vulnerable to the effects of mental and emotional stigma and potentially less able to apply themselves to learning. The Jigsaw philosophy values every child as a unique human being and does not discriminate but supports them all to achieve the best they can be.

Jigsaw's lessons help children explore why a loving and caring family is important. They have been written so that no child is made to feel inadequate or unaccepted, whatever their family background.

#### 2) Children may already be aware that some people are LGBTQ, or could be using vocabulary such as 'gay' to insult others.

Children will have heard, or will come to hear, some words such as 'gay' or 'transgender'. They may know some LGBTQ people, or have seen them portrayed in movies, television programmes, TV adverts and on social media. As a result, children may have questions or have misunderstandings about what these terms mean. Jigsaw lessons help by giving age-appropriate information, or assisting teachers to clarify children's questions age-appropriately. (See later).

Jigsaw also teaches children that **any word** used as an insult is hurtful and unkind. Within some of these lessons, children may raise homophobic or transphobic words they know or have used themselves. This affords teachers an opportunity to explain that using these words, in this way, is unacceptable. **We are teaching children that respect and kindness are important values.**

### **3) Teaching children to accept difference and to foster good relationships with others**

Jigsaw does not 'promote' LGBTQ lifestyles. However, it does raise children's awareness that some people in society are LGBTQ. This is not done in isolation. When discussing similarity and difference in Jigsaw lessons, children learn about a whole range of differences, such as difference in physical appearance and personality, likes and dislikes, and that people can have differences of opinion. This helps them to understand that we are all unique human beings. Within the context of these lessons they will also be introduced to different cultures and ethnicities, people with different religions and beliefs, and about people with disability or special needs. They will also be aware that some people are LGBTQ.

When discussing any differences between people, Jigsaw helps teach children to form opinions about others based on whether they are kind, law-abiding, respectful, trustworthy, and responsible people, rather than judging them on appearance or whether a particular aspect of their lifestyle is different to their own. Children also learn about discrimination and prejudice including racism, sexism, and ageism.

The Jigsaw Puzzle (unit), 'Celebrating Difference' helps children to understand that difference does not need to be feared but can be a source of celebration. This supports schools with their obligation to align with the Equality Act 2010.

### **4) Schools have a duty to uphold the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**

The PSED or the Equality Act, as it is more commonly known, requires schools to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relationships. By doing so, the Equality Act encourages schools to meet the diverse needs of children and to improve outcomes for all pupils regardless of background. Part of the Equality 'duty' is to teach children about rights and responsibilities, acceptance, empathy and understanding of others.

### **5) English schools have a duty to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils, including understanding British values.**

The requirement to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is set out in the Education Act (2002). In 2014, additional guidance was published for schools with regards to teaching British values. Guidance states that schools should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance, and makes it clear that children should learn about discrimination and how to combat it. As previously discussed, Jigsaw lessons, particularly in the Celebrating Difference units of work, include teaching children about acceptance, empathy, prejudice and discrimination, and the rights and responsibilities they have as UK and global citizens. A school's SMSC education is an important part of the Ofsted inspection framework.

### **6) Schools have a legal obligation to safeguard their pupils**

In England, new legally-binding safeguarding guidance was released to schools in September 2018. This establishes that schools must protect all children from physical and emotional abuse

including bullying on and off line and abuse that could happen from an adult or from other children. Teaching children to accept there are a whole range of differences in people, helps combat stigma, discrimination and bullying. Children also need to be taught how to access help if they are involved in a bullying, or abusive situation. Jigsaw's lessons, particularly in the Celebrating Difference and Relationships units of work, teach children why bullying can happen and why it is unfair, how to recognise a bullying/ abusive situation and how to get help. Within this work children discuss a wide range of reasons why some people are bullied, or become bullies, and this includes some discussion around name-calling which includes the inappropriate use of words such as 'gay' and 'lesbian' as an insult towards another person. Anti-bullying guidance issued to schools in 2016 makes it clear that any bullying work should include teaching children why inappropriate use of these words is wrong and homophobic.

## 7) Statutory Relationships and Health Education in England

The Department for Education has already passed legislation to include mandatory Relationships and Health Education in the National Curriculum for primary schools from September 2020. New school guidance was ratified in March 2019 and sets out to schools what they are expected to teach. Primary children will learn that not all families are the same and to respect these differences. They will also learn about bullying and how to treat others with respect, whether this is within their immediate relationships, or in the wider community. The guidance also states that when learning about different families, care should be taken to avoid stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances. It also reaffirms the duty for schools to comply with the Equality Act, where sexual orientation and gender-reassignment are two of the nine protected characteristics. The Relationships and Health Education guidance does not suggest a specific age when LGBTQ should be brought into the curriculum, but there is an expectation for it to be included in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Schools using Jigsaw will be compliant with these new regulations.

### What exactly does Briary through Jigsaw teach about LGBTQ issues and is it age-appropriate?

- **How much LGBTQ teaching is there in Jigsaw?**

It is firstly important to understand that any reference to adult relationships, whether LGBTQ or heterosexual people is NOT describing sexual activity as this would be inappropriate. Relationships lessons focus on respect and regard between people e.g. friendships and families.

In upper Key Stage 2 the Changing Me Unit age-appropriately explains puberty and the biology of human reproduction.

Jigsaw is a complete scheme of work for Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) covering the entire PSHE curriculum for primary children aged 4-11. **Only a very small number of these lessons in the entire scheme have any focus upon LGBTQ issues.**

Briary and Jigsaw's philosophy is about inclusion and valuing all children.

### What LGBTQ material is taught in lower primary (infants)?

LGBTQ is not mentioned specifically in lessons for children aged 4-7. However, in lessons that explore differences in families, pictorial resources such as those below are used as a discussion focus. Questions such as; 'Which photos show a family?' 'What is important about a family?' and

‘What does your family mean to you?’ help children understand about their own and other’s families and how a family is founded in love and respect. Should children raise the question about pictures that show a same-gender couple, Jigsaw’s teacher notes suggest this is explained to children in the following way: ‘Some children have two mummies or two daddies.’ Teachers are not expected to go beyond this response, or give more detail, as that would not be age-appropriate. However, this does acknowledge and include any children who have LGBTQ people as part of their family.



### What LGBTQ content is discussed for children aged 7-11?

In materials for 7-11-year olds, some lessons about bullying provide opportunities for teachers to discuss and correct homophobic language the children may be using, such as the inappropriate use of the words ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’, or the use of slang words that are LGBTQ-phobic. In the same lessons they will also be exploring racist and sexist language, or insulting language that is used about a person’s physical appearance, their abilities, or whether they have special needs. In these lessons, teachers explain that any insult is unkind and hurtful. Teachers explain that being gay is a type of adult relationship where two men or two women love each other in a romantic way, and if they choose, they can get married. Teachers are not expected to go beyond this definition and give more detail. It is simply explaining what being gay means and that the word ‘gay’ (or other LGBTQ-related words) should not be used in an insulting or derogatory way.

In Jigsaw’s Relationships and Changing Me lessons for pupils aged 7-11 that cover relationships, puberty, growing-up and how a baby is made, children are given opportunities to ask questions if there is something they don’t understand. LGBTQ relationships or being LGBTQ are not explicitly discussed in the lessons, unless questions are raised about it. In which case, Jigsaw’s teacher notes give possible age-appropriate ways for teachers to answer these questions. Some examples are below:

Q) What is being gay?

A) Being gay is when a man loves/ fancies another man in a romantic way, or a woman loves/fancies a woman. They may go out together as boyfriend and girlfriend, or girlfriend and boyfriend, or in time they may choose to get married.

Q) How does someone know they are gay?

A) A person usually knows they are gay or not when they are an adult and have finished going through puberty. However, this is not always the case.

Q) How do gay people make a baby?

A) Gay couples can't make a baby themselves because a baby needs both a woman's ovum and a man's sperm to be made. Some gay people choose to adopt children. Some might get help from a doctor/science (e.g. IVF) to make a baby, in the same way that male/female couples do whose bodies can't have children. (If children push for more detail, teachers are advised to say they will learn more about different ways to make a baby in secondary school, and not to expand beyond the example answer).

Q) How do gay people have sex?

A) Gay people have sex in lots of different ways which is just the same as for couples who are male and female (straight/heterosexual). Sex is a special and private part of an adult relationship. (If children push for more detail, teachers are advised to say that in primary school lessons will focus on growing up, puberty and how babies are made, and they will learn more about LGBTQ relationships in secondary school and not to expand beyond the example answer).

### **Being Transgender**

In one lesson for 10-11-year olds, children are introduced to the word 'transgender' so they understand what it means. This lesson has a focus on prejudice and discrimination where a transgender example is used. The Equality Act is also explained in an age-appropriate way. Being transgender is discussed in the following terms:

Most people are not transgender. A transgender person doesn't feel their body matches with their gender. Let me explain...a person who was born with a male body may feel they are a female, and a person born with a female body may feel they are a male. There can be all sorts of reasons why this happens. Some transgender people choose to change their appearance or body so their gender matches with how they feel. This is called transitioning. Not all transgender people choose to do this though. (If children want more detail, teachers are advised to explain they will learn more about transgender people in secondary school and they should return to the focus of the lesson which is about prejudice and discrimination).

Jigsaw's decision to include this lesson was partly prompted by requests from schools who have pupils of primary age that have been identified as transgender, or are undergoing transition. Primary schools with a transgender pupil needed a lesson to help the rest of the class understand and empathise with their trans classmate. Jigsaw's decision was to include this lesson as a matter of course within the Year 6 (Age 10 -11) materials so children understand what being transgender means, in line with the Equality Act. But, if a school needed to use the lesson in earlier years

(because they have a trans pupil in a specific class), they are free to do so and should adapt the lesson accordingly for the appropriate age group.

This lesson does not promote transgender identity. It simply explains what being transgender is, and how some people who are trans face unfair prejudice and discrimination, in the same way that other people do e.g. through racism, ageism, sexism and prejudice against people who are disabled.

The new DFE guidance and legislation for Relationships and Health Education encourages schools to be open and honest with parents and carers about what they intend to include and how RSHE is going to be taught.

***This leaflet was created using information supplied by Jigsaw, Briary's chosen PSHE program.***