

My name is Catherine Haslam I am a gay woman and a Deputy Headteacher in a Middle School in Northumberland. I have remained in the same school for 18 years and started as Head of Music teaching across four year groups. I was fortunate enough to be promoted as SENDCo, then Head of Year and then Assistant Headteacher which allowed me a place on the school's Senior Leadership Team. This was the platform for me to have the opportunity to really push the equality and diversity strands of our curriculum at a higher level. It was also a chance for me to take a greater role in the promotion of inclusion and to really work alongside organisations (listed below). These organisations and charities not only provided help and support to me personally but have also offered fantastic resources to use in the classroom and in my regular assemblies.

One of the most important strands which underpins my ethos of teaching is to celebrate individuality and that it is more than OK to be different, In fact, I actively encourage difference and being individual.

We were the first school in Northumberland to achieve the Diana award for our work on Antibullying and again this was a great opportunity for me to work with other staff members and agencies outside of school-(Stonewall/ Mesmac N.E./Trinity Youth Project/Tavistock and Porter/Diversity Role Models/Ditch the Label).

I feel very strongly that our pupils should feel happy and comfortable within their own skin: that they should feel safe and secure and that they are confident of seeking support and strategies should they need any guidance or advice about sexual orientation/gender identity/life/friendships

I have also taken an honest approach with my pupils-sharing personal experiences of my own childhood and my own struggles with accepting who and what I was/am. There have been times when I have refrained from discussing my private life/ my partner

It was difficult not being able to talk openly about my private life in situations where I wanted to, so I have worked on how I can address those issues for myself. I now feel confident that I can be myself, I can choose when and how I disclose information about my personal life, when it is appropriate to do this.

I have been extremely lucky in terms of the lack of prejudice I have experienced on this journey but nevertheless I am concerned about some of the viewpoints and behaviours I witness in today's ever developing (social media led) world.

I feel so privileged to be in a position where I can really make a difference. With approximately 450 pupils in my school I have so many opportunities to help and

guide those young people as best I can. Using my own experiences and with the help of support groups outside of schools, I feel confidently equipped in my duty to ensure the very best provision for pupils who may be questioning their sexuality or their gender. With this in mind, I have recently created a new pupil led group-the 'E Stars'. This team of twenty 13-year olds will offer support for any pupils who may not feel comfortable going to an adult but have questions about equality and diversity issues. The E Stars are about to embark on a block of intensive training and will ultimately help to signpost other students to the right area of support within the school.

The team will also plan and deliver assemblies to the rest of the pupils on issues such as transphobia/homophobia/racism and gender identity. They will feedback to staff, parents and governors and meet weekly with myself and other teaching staff to discuss issues which have arisen throughout the nature of their role. I look forward to watching this scheme develop and I will continue to strive for the very best levels of support and awareness for our pupils and our community.