

Top Tips for Setting up a Youth Group in School (from Matthew Arnold and Wheatley Park School)

1. Have a teacher as a point of contact.

Get support from staff who you feel you can trust - if you feel comfortable with them then it will help students be more open. Make sure you have a teacher at all meetings.

2. Get support from the top

Talk to your school's senior management team and get their agreement and involvement. Have regular meetings with the Headteacher/senior manager about the group and what the group would like to do. Make sure the group links to the school Anti-Bullying policy, that this specifically mentions LGBT bullying and that the group is part of a whole school approach to promote LGBT inclusion.

3. Be inclusive

Emphasise the group is for absolutely everyone, including supportive friends and allies. Ensure the group is very inclusive and non-judgemental

4. Consult

Listen to what the students want – this could be in the form of a survey or questionnaire

5. Safety

Keep the meeting room private not stating where and when the group meet on posters and in announcements. It works if interested members e-mail to find out where the group is held or talk to their teacher/ HOY/ Tutor etc to get further information (to prevent students who may be abusive from being present) Have the designated room near a staff room; not near an area with lots of students around. A regular (weekly) meeting time can help students to feel supported.

6. Expectations

Have clear ideas about what is/isn't acceptable within the group, what the group want to achieve, how the group will run. It may be helpful to has some written terms of reference and aims of the group.

7. Confidentiality

What's said in the group stays in the group.

Young people will feel differently about being LGBT and who they are 'out' to; some will be out to everyone; others to a few or just the group. Think carefully about how you can protect young people from being 'outed' to family, friends or peers.

8. Aim to educate and promote support

As well as LGBT people learning about their identity, it's also important that straight or cisgender people are educated on LGBT issues. Run assemblies about the group and other LGBT issues. Staff can wear badges / lanyards that indicate that they are approachable and supportive. Use student word of mouth to promote in a supportive way

9. Talk to other schools

Learn from what they have done. This will help you get advice about what works.

10. Persevere

At the start there may not be many members in attendance, but numbers will go up and people do benefit greatly from groups like these.