



Kirkby High School



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11th May 2023

Dear Parents/Carer of Year's 8, 9 and 10 students

The school has been speaking with Eleanor Grace, a PhD student from Manchester Metropolitan University, about their research project exploring school factors that may influence student experiences of bullying and microaggressions related to LGBTQ+ identity. Our students have been invited to participate in their study to pilot a questionnaire that will ask students to assess the school on different factors, such as the curriculum or support at school, and report how often, if at all, they have witnessed anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments at school. We feel this research, which is also being carried out in other schools, is important to help develop a questionnaire to assess LGBTQ+ supportive school factors and support a PhD project.

You will find an invitation letter and opt-out consent form attached to this letter. You are asked to email **admin@kirkbyhighschool.net** **FAO Mr Greenbank**, before Thursday 25th May if you do not want your child to take part. This method is known as 'opt-out' consent. It has been chosen, rather than an opt-in method, because often forms are not sent back to school which can prevent research from taking place. Often whoever is at home is not actively denying their child to participate, but instead simply forgets to return the form in time due to other commitments and responsibilities.

If you have any concerns, please do get in contact with me. Alternatively, you can contact the researcher, Eleanor Grace, via eleanor.grace@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Dobson

Headteacher



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Dear Parents/Guardians

LGBTQ+ supportive school factors - Pilot Study

Invitation to research. Who am I?

My name is Eleanor Grace (she/her), and I am a PhD student at Manchester Metropolitan University exploring school factors that may influence student experiences of bullying and microaggressions related to LGBTQ+ identity. This phase of the project involves piloting a questionnaire to students to answer questions about different school factors deemed to indicate an LGBTQ+ supportive environment and how often, if at all, they may have witnessed different anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments within the school. The research is due to take place on **Friday 26th May 2023**. Details of the research I am carrying out in your child's school are given below.

If after reading this information you decide you do not want your child to take part, please inform the school by emailing admin@kirkbyhighschool.net, FAO Mr Greenbank, before Thursday 25th May. If you do not send a response, we will presume you are willing for your child to participate in the research project. Please note once questionnaires are collected, you will not be able to withdraw your child from the study as students will be told to **not** write their names on their questionnaire.

This method is known as 'opt-out' consent. It has been chosen, rather than an opt-in method, because often forms are not sent back to school which can prevent research from taking place. We know that often whoever is at home is very busy and not actively denying their child to participate, but instead simply forgets to return the form in time due to other commitments and responsibilities.

You should receive a reminder about the project and this information one week after receiving this letter from the school. Moreover, you are invited to a Q&A session hosted by the school and myself as the lead researcher to have any questions answered about the project. This will be on Wednesday 17th May, 3.15 – 4pm. If you cannot attend, please email any questions directly to me via eleanor.grace@stu.mmu.ac.uk.

What is the research project?

My PhD project is exploring school factors that may mean it is more or less likely for students to experience bullying and microaggressions (more subtle, everyday negative behaviours) related to actual or perceived LGBTQ+ identity. The aim of this research phase is to pilot a questionnaire and the administration process to see whether it is fit for purpose for a later phase. It is **not** to assess the school or produce a case study. However, I will provide an individualised report to the school.

What will students be asked to do?

All students in your child's class will be asked to complete an **anonymous** questionnaire with two scales measuring 1) LGBTQ+ supportive school factors e.g. whether students think the curriculum is LGBTQ+ inclusive, and 2) witnessing microaggressions related to LGBTQ+ identity (what we call 'anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment'). Several classes will be invited to participate in this study. Age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity will also be collected if students wish to provide this information. This should take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete within form time and has been approved by the Headteacher who is happy for the school to

take part. A link to the questionnaire is provided at the bottom of this letter so that you can see the questions that will be asked.

The school has been asked to inform me well in advance of our visit if there are any students that may need any accommodations to take part in this research so that we can collaboratively discuss potential solutions.

Do students have to take part?

No. If you send back the opt-out form below or email the school, your child will be provided with an alternative task while in class. Otherwise, students will be provided with clear instructions and any their questions will be answered before they provide their informed consent and complete the questionnaire. Your child will be told they do not have to participate if they do not want to. They will be provided with an alternative task to complete and can stop taking part in the study up until they return their form. There will be a final question at the end of the questionnaire asking students whether they are happy with their answers to be used. However, as the questionnaires are anonymous, I will not be able to return them after they have been handed back to protect the confidentiality of responses.

Participants will be debriefed afterwards and advised to speak with a trusted adult at school or at home if they are upset or would like to speak to someone after completing the questionnaire. Organisations, such as Childline and Kooth will also be signposted for students to access support. Students will also be informed of their local LGBTQ+ youth group as well as Proud Connections, an online service supporting LGBTQ+ young people.

Students will be informed that their responses will be anonymous and confidential, as such, they will be instructed not to write their (or anyone else's) name on the sheets. Confidentiality will be maintained unless they write something that gives us cause for concern about their or someone else's safety. LGBTQ+ identity is not considered a safeguarding concern. It is known that young people often write additional comments and on occasion this has indicated a risk to their safety (e.g., 'I'm being hit and kicked'). Students will be told that their questionnaires will be screened for any potential concerns like the example given. If we identify a concern, only the information related to the concern, not their responses to the questionnaire, will be passed to the school before we leave the premises. We will try to identify the young person by their class teacher reviewing the handwriting and potentially some demographics. Subsequently the school's safeguarding policy will be followed.

What happens with the data collected?

Questionnaires will be kept securely in a locked cabinet and inputted into an electronic database. The paper-based forms will be held for a minimum of 10 years in the locked cabinet. Data retention is important to ensure that any issues that arise from publication of the findings can be clarified and responded to appropriately.

Data will be held securely on my university OneDrive folder and only myself and my supervisory team, Dr Claire Fox, Dr Steph Ainsworth and Jayne Mugglestone, will have access to the data. I will write up the findings of the pilot study for my PhD thesis due in 2024 as well as an article to submit for publication in an academic journal.

A summary of findings will also be provided to the school and can be made available to share with yourself.

Data Protection Law

Data protection legislation requires that we state the 'legal basis' for processing information. In the case of research, this is 'a task in the public interest.' If we use more sensitive information, such as information about someone's health, religion, or ethnicity (called 'special category' information), our basis lies in research in the public interest. Manchester Metropolitan is the Controller for this information and is responsible for looking after the data and using it in line with the requirements of the data protection legislation applicable in the UK.

Your child has the right to make choices about their information under the data protection legislation, such as the right of access and the right to object, although in some circumstances these rights are not absolute. If you have any questions, or would like to exercise these rights, please contact myself or the University Data Protection Officer using dataprotection@mmu.ac.uk or 0161 247 3331.

Your child can stop being a part of the study at any time, without giving a reason. You can ask us to delete the data at any time, but it might not be possible. As the data is pseudonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it after the questionnaires have been collected because we will not be asking for names on the forms and we will need to protect the confidentiality of other students' data.

Who has reviewed this research project?

This study has been reviewed by the Health and Education Research Ethics and Governance Committee at Manchester Metropolitan University and has been granted ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact myself, Eleanor Grace, via eleanor.grace@stu.mmu.ac.uk or my supervisor, Dr Claire Fox, on claire.fox@mmu.ac.uk.

Alternatively, if you are unhappy with any aspect of the study, please contact the Faculty of Health and Education Research Ethics Committee at MMU on FOHE-ethics@mmu.ac.uk addressed to Dr Gill Yeowell, Deputy Head of Research Ethics and Governance for the Faculty of Health and Education.

Yours faithfully,

Eleanor Grace

Link to questionnaire: [v.3 Pilot study questionnaire.docx](#)

REPLY SLIP FOR RESEARCH: Please email **FAO Mr Greenbank, admin@kirkbyhighschool.net, before Thursday 25th May with the following information:**

I **DO NOT** give permission for (child's name) _____ to take part.

Child's year group: _____ Child's class: _____