

8. Education

UN Commission on the Status of Women

Conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality (extract), Forty-eighth session 1-12 March 2004

The Commission urges UN agencies, Governments, the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders, to:

- 'Develop and implement programmes for pre-schools, schools, community centers, youth organisations, sport clubs and centres, and other groups dealing with children and youth, including training for teachers, social workers and other professionals who deal with children to foster positive attitudes and behaviours on gender equality;
- 'Promote critical reviews of school curricula, textbooks and other information education and communication materials at all levels in order to recommend ways to strengthen the promotion of gender equality that involves the engagement of boys as well as girls...'

The Council of the European Union

Conclusions on men and gender equality (extract) 30 November and 1 December 2006

The Council of the European Union:

- 'encourages the development, from early childcare and education, of pedagogic practices aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes, also paying attention to educational methods and tools that improve the capacity and potential of boys and men to care for themselves and others...'
- 'encourages the Member States to pay attention to the promotion of gender equality, as well as how men relate to it, through debate and information on gender stereotypes and the relations between men and women, especially with regard to young people'.

Introduction

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International and European context

'One powerful force for change is the education system, which can influence gender equality in both positive and negative ways. Schools can be important sites for positive learning about gender equality and can facilitate a shift towards a culture based on gender equality. Gender sensitive curricula, classroom discussions on gender equality, teacher education that promotes positive role models, and sensitization of school administrators and parents are critical in promoting greater contribution of men and boys to gender equality. School environments can, however, also contribute to perpetuating gender stereotypes through biases in school curricula and materials as well as teachers' attitudes and behaviour'.⁴²⁷

Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan

A range of UN reports have argued in recent years that 'gender mainstreaming' must be at the heart of any educational policy development and implementation. They refer both to the need for gender equality in education to be a goal and to '*the importance of boys and men being actively involved in making this happen*'.⁴²⁸ It is noted that '*one powerful force for improving gender relations is the education system: schools can be important sites for positive learning about, and can facilitate a shift towards a culture based on, gender equality*'.⁴²⁹ The focus is on gender equality in education but there is recognition that this will necessarily involve addressing and changing some aspects of the ways in which most boys and men currently feel, think and act. This dual approach – stressing gender equality while being sensitive to the ways in which gender can limit and condition life for boys/men (and girls/women) – informs the analysis and recommendations in this section.

A 'gender mainstreaming' framework makes it possible to address seriously boys' and men's needs whilst maintaining an overall focus on gender equality. In this way, it helps to guard against any approach that seeks to improve education for boys/men, but may undermine the education of girls/women. In most non-OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, educational projects are, necessarily, aimed at improving the access of girls and women to educational opportunities. Yet there are examples (e.g. in the Caribbean)⁴³⁰ where this approach has encouraged initiatives to address boys' educational experience and achievement. This framework

427. Report of the Secretary General, *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, Commission on the Status of Women, 48th session, New York: 1-12 March 2004

428. For example, see Connell R.W., *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Expert Group meeting, Brasilia, Brazil, 21-24 October 2003, EGM/Men-Boys-GE/2003/BP.1

429. Report of the Secretary General, *The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality*, Commission on the Status of Women, 48th session, New York: 1-12 March 2004

430. In *Gender Mainstreaming in Education: A Reference manual for Governments and other stakeholders* (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999) reference is made to how this approach has fostered work in The Caribbean on the problem of boys 'underachieving' at school

would enable other important work to be done, for instance, to support boys and young men in developing better emotional literacy and less rigid gender identities. It also fits well with initiatives to engage fathers more effectively in their children's education, which have started to emerge in schools and family learning projects (see section on 'Fatherhood', page 65).⁴³¹

There appears to be a fair degree of consistency in terms of the, narrowly defined, 'educational levels' of girls and boys across European countries. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has attempted to assess and standardise measures of educational achievement of 15 year olds across countries in the OECD. On examining the European data, a pattern familiar to educationalists in the UK is apparent: girls do significantly better in reading; boys do as well or better than girls in Maths and there is no significant difference in Science.⁴³²

At European level, the Council of Europe has recently produced a series of recommendations to the governments of Member States on mainstreaming gender in education.⁴³³ This document proposes that a gender perspective, aimed at encouraging gender equality, be incorporated into every aspect of education: from legislation through to teacher training; from curriculum design through to school governance and organisation. It presents a comprehensive outline of how gender equality in education should be addressed for the benefit of boys and men, girls and women. These recommendations are fairly sophisticated, thorough and highly relevant to education in England and Wales; they could be used as 'a guide for action' and detailed strategies developed to implement their recommendations within schools and other educational settings.

The rest of this section examines boys' and young men's experiences of education in the UK. It examines: how they are getting on, what difficulties they may be encountering and how their educational experience might be improved. Throughout, the intention is to promote a 'social justice' approach⁴³⁴ which recognises both the negative impact of current gendered power relations as well as problematic aspects of many current 'constructions of masculinity', i.e. current ways of being boys and men. Educational policies should address gender equality, and the ways in which boys' and girls' gender development can be a limiting, restrictive process (both for individuals and for their relationships with each other).

Boys and 'achievement'

The most publicly visible issue regarding boys' education is currently that of 'failing' or 'under-achieving' boys. This concern has largely been generated by a plethora of achievement data which show that boys are doing worse than girls in formal assessments in most subjects. Moreover, the differences between boys and girls are present in pre-school and persist through to university.

It is important, however, not to focus too narrowly on these crude measures of gendered educational performance. As will be outlined below, there is much more to education than exam results, and there are other aspects of boys' education that are equally important and currently in need of attention. But these statistics make the headlines and do reflect some problems with aspects of boys' educational experience.

431. Goldman R.(2005) *Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Education*, London: National Family and Parenting Institute

432. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2003)

433. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on gender mainstreaming in education, 1,006th meeting, 10 October 2007

434. For an outline of a social justice approach to the education of boys, see Reed L.R. (1998) *Zero tolerance: gender performance and school failure*, in Epstein D., Ellwood J., Hey V., and Maw J., *Failing Boys?: Issues in Gender and Achievement*, Buckingham, OUP

According to Government research and statistics:⁴³⁵

Girls, on average, do better than boys at GCSE: In 2007, 65 per cent of girls and 56 per cent of boys achieved the current 'benchmark' of five or more A*-C grades.

Girls are more likely to sit 'A' levels and on average do better: in 2007, 54 per cent of 'A' level entries were girls, 46 per cent boys. Girls' pass rate was four per cent higher than boys. Girls get higher grades than boys at both GCSE and 'A' level.

In 2005-2006, the probability that a 17 year old male would participate in higher education by age 20 was estimated to be 30.5 per cent. For a 17 year old female the probability was estimated to be over seven points higher at 37.7 per cent.

While there are debates about how exactly to interpret these statistics and variations depending on specific subject and educational stage, the general picture is pretty clear: girls, on average, achieve better educational assessment marks than boys. The differences are highest in English and language-based subjects and minimal in Maths and Science. The differences exist before the age of seven and are maintained throughout schooling, with fluctuations along the way. In many subjects this difference in performance has been around for decades; in others it is relatively recent.⁴³⁶ This alerts us to the fact that many of the issues, for example the concern about boys' literacy, have been around for a long time.

Beyond basic gender comparisons, it is essential to note that there are other factors – social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, family structure and so on⁴³⁷ – causing obvious differences in the educational achievement of boys and young men, differences between individual boys and differences between different groups of boys.

Most importantly, differences in achievement based on social class are far greater than differences in achievement between boys and girls. For example, the social class attainment gap at Key Stage four (as measured by percentage point difference of those eligible/not eligible for free school meals)⁴³⁸ is three times as wide as the gender gap. A young boy's social class is a much better predictor of his future educational achievement than his sex. Boys from the higher professional class⁴³⁹ are doing far better than the national average in educational attainment right across the curriculum, and far better than the majority of girls – just not quite as well as girls from the same social class. Similarly, girls who receive free school meals do much worse than the national average – just not quite as badly as boys who receive free school meals.⁴⁴⁰

Whereas the gender differences seem to be fairly consistent across all classes,⁴⁴¹ some statistical analyses suggest that they are wider amongst higher-achieving groups of girls and boys.⁴⁴² But although boys from the higher professional class do less well than their female peers at school, the effect of this slightly lower achievement on their quality of life is negligible (especially in terms of their future employment and careers). Nevertheless, the quality of these boys' educational experience – the extent to which they develop emotional literacy, learn positive self-esteem, learn how to relate equally, respectfully and constructively to women and other men – is a concern for them, as it is for other boys.

435. DfES, *Gender and Education* (ibid.), and Broeke S., Hamed J. (2008) *Gender Gaps in Higher Education Participation: An Analysis of the Relationships between Prior Attainment and Young Participation by Gender, Socio-Economic Class and Ethnicity*, Research Report 08 14, London: Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

436. For example, see Cohen M. (1998) *A habit of healthy idleness: boys underachievement in historical perspective*, in Epstein et al (ibid.). She points out that a gender gap in language-based subjects is not a recent phenomenon.

437. It is also important to recognise similarities as well as differences. See Becky Francis (2000) *Boys, Girls and Achievement: Addressing the classroom issues*, Routledge Falmer

438. Note that free school meals are a fairly crude measure of social class, simply comparing the 13 per cent of pupils who are eligible with the 87 per cent who are not.

439. Based on the standard Office for National Statistics socio-economic classification, which differentiates social class differences more precisely than free school meals.

440. DfES (2007) *Gender and Education: The Evidence on Pupils in England*, Nottingham: DfES Publications

441. Gorard S., Rees G., Salisbury J., *Investigating the Patterns of Differential Attainment of Boys and Girls in School*, British Educational Research Journal Volume 27(2), April 2001

The greater significance of class does not therefore mean gender should be ignored, but it does locate 'the problem of boys' in proper context. In fact, the educational under-achievement of children (whether boys or girls) from poorer backgrounds is a much bigger problem. A social justice approach to gender and education will have little legitimacy unless this reality is acknowledged.

Turning to ethnicity, some black and minority ethnic groups (Indians and Chinese for example) get much better than average results in educational assessments, whereas others (Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, for example) get worse.⁴⁴³ The average socio-economic class of a particular ethnic group is a fairly reliable predictor of their achievement, with ethnicity as an independent variable having little effect. There are ethnic differences in educational achievement which intersect with gender, but the gap between boys and girls is fairly consistent across all ethnic groups, though with a significantly larger gap between African Caribbean girls and boys.⁴⁴⁴ Ethnicity is far less significant than class in determining educational achievement but obviously will (like class) have a significant impact on boys' (and girls') experience of schooling and education.

The quality of boys' educational experiences

It is important to broaden analysis of boys' status and needs in education and society. The 'achievement issue' has received most media attention and triggered policies (so far with little success) aimed at getting boys to achieve at the same level as girls, but there are many other pressing concerns for boys and young men which their education could also contribute to addressing.

When addressing the educational needs of boys and men it is important to recognise that traditional gender inequalities and behaviours persist. Women still have less (structurally) powerful positions in society and at work and are still paid less, on average, than men (see section on 'Work', page 45). Violence against boys and men and against girls and women is predominantly carried out by boys and men (see section on 'Violence', page 123). As outlined below, policies could be developed to enable boys and young men to recognise and learn about these inequalities and the impact they have, and encourage them to take these issues seriously and think about how they can address them.

Many boys and young men also seem unhappy with aspects of their lives and identity at school, and in society generally. There is considerable evidence, much of it from research within schools, that the lives available to boys and men and the ways of being boys and men can be damaging and limiting, perhaps even more so than those available to girls.⁴⁴⁶ In many ways, this unhappiness represents an important opportunity for exploring this agenda with boys and young men, and encouraging them to 'own' it – to see it as something that matters to them and that they should care about, rather than as something that other people say is important.

Boys still dominate in the classroom while bullying and disruptive classroom behaviour is more common amongst boys. Boys are much more likely than girls to be: excluded from school (80 per cent of permanent exclusions are of boys); be defined as having Special Educational Needs (7:3 male to female ratio); and be defined as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (8:2 male to female ratio).⁴⁴⁷ Most boys seem to be affected, in some way or other, by anti-school peer groups. Boys seem to be hugely influenced by their peers and many of the masculinities on offer seem, in some ways, to be defined in opposition to formal education. Boys' behaviour is often

442. Gorard S. (2000) *Education and Social Justice*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press

443. DfES, *Gender and education* (ibid.)

444. DfES, *Gender and Education* (ibid.)

445. See Sewell T., *Loose cannons: exploding the myth of the 'black macho' lad*, in Epstein et al (ibid.)

446. Much of this kind of evidence has come from qualitative research exploring boys' sense of self, their views of others, and their masculinities. See for example: Frosh S., Phoenix A., Pattman R. (200) *Young Masculinities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave; Seidler V. (2006) *Young Men and Masculinities: Global Cultures and Intimate Lives*, London: Zed Books; and Martino W., (2001) *Powerful people aren't usually really kind, friendly, open people!: Boys interrogating masculinities in school*, in Martino W., Meyen B. (eds.), *What About the Boys?*, Buckingham: OUP

447. DfES, *Gender and Education* (ibid.)

'policed' to fit in with a limited range of acceptable behaviour patterns. Even boys who resist such gendered behaviour have to deal with it, as of course do girls. Boys and men are claimed to lack emotional literacy and emotional intelligence and when they display these intelligences are often harshly treated by their peers. Both boys and girls see girls as more caring and co-operative than boys, and able to negotiate more caring and supportive relationships. Boys and men are more violent and more likely to commit suicide. Many boys and men experience feelings of powerlessness in relation to others.⁴⁴⁸

The introduction to this report (see page 22) indicates that qualities such as those above are not biologically determined – indeed they are hugely influenced by factors such as the ways that boys are brought up, their negotiations with their peers, the surrounding societal culture and so on. What this suggests is that positive changes in the lives of boys are achievable, and that there is an enormous need for educational initiatives that are geared more towards: emotional literacy; understanding relationships; respect for others; developing self-esteem; challenging and exploring attitudes to women and to violence. Addressing these issues is likely to have a positive impact on boys' enjoyment of, and achievement at, school and education.

Addressing boys' educational needs within the current educational climate

There is no point assessing the status and needs of boys and men in education and advocating a few positive policy suggestions (aimed at gender equality and/or addressing restrictive gender formations) without trying to work out how such policies might lead to actual changes that meet these needs. This means examining the general educational context and the wider social and economic climate, and its potential to enable the identified educational needs to be met. An educational project that really engaged with the kind of issues outlined above could only be 'mainstreamed' into the education system if the process involved some fairly significant changes to that system and wider society.

The general structure, ethos and language of education are significant. The increasing 'marketisation' of State education tends to work against more co-operation and equality within education generally. What has been termed a 're-masculinisation' of educational organisations⁴⁴⁹ – including a shoring up of hierarchical structures of leadership and an overemphasis on 'targets' – will need to be countered if the development of more co-operative, caring, flexible, open, less competitive masculinities is going to flourish.

Further, there is research to suggest that the current educational climate makes it difficult for boys (or girls) to get a decent, rounded education. Whilst the principle of assessing the progress of teachers and pupils is widely accepted, there are serious concerns about the current over-emphasis on the importance of national tests, which may skew the curriculum in favour of those parts likely to be tested, and focus attention on those students most likely to help schools reach government targets.⁴⁵⁰ Within such a climate, children are often seen as little more than '*value-added knowledge containers*',⁴⁵¹ and there is a tendency for policy responses to boys' 'problems' (no matter how well-intentioned) to involve narrow, and increasingly short term, targets. Having said this, there are some recent signs of the loosening of this targets culture, for example the recent abandonment of SATs for Key Stage 3 pupils and the development of more tailored and flexible forms of assessment.

448. Seidler V. (ibid.)

449. This process is discussed by Pat Mahony in *Girls will be girls and boys will be first*, in Epstein et al (ibid.), and Haywood C., Mac An Ghaill M. (2001) *The significance of teaching English boys: exploring social change, modern schooling and the making of masculinities*, in Martino et al. (ibid.)

450. Children, Schools and Families Committee, Testing and Assessment, Third Report of Session 2007-2008, HC 169-I, House of Commons, London: The Stationery Office

451. See: Reed L.R., in Epstein et al. (ibid.), Haywood C., Mac An Ghaill M., in Martino et al. (ibid.)

The broader societal context is not necessarily conducive to fostering more co-operation and equality between boys and girls, men and women. Sharpening economic inequalities, the consumer culture, breakdown of communities: all these impact on boys' and young men's lives (as they do with girls). There have been several research studies which demonstrate that aspects of working class boys' masculinity and their attitudes to education are completely bound up with their, often sophisticated, understanding of the wider hierarchical society and their place within it.⁴⁵² Similarly, boys who are privileged also understand their place in the same hierarchy. Any effective policy will need to take account of this broader context, and be realistic in its goals.

A positive framework for engaging with boys' education

Many of the issues raised here point to the need for boys to address, understand and reconstitute the way their masculine identities are constructed, develop and are lived out, both at school and in wider society. They suggest the need for many boys and men to learn how to engage in more equal, non-violent, relations with girls and women and with each other. It is also true that masculine identities are not constructed or acted out in isolation from feminine identities. Therefore, these issues need to be addressed with and by girls as well as boys, together and separately, to achieve lasting and effective change.

There are many stages in boys' and men's lives, and many educational and other settings/places where policy strategies are needed: from pre-school through family learning to university and 'life-long learning'; in schools and in less formal educational spaces such as youth clubs and voluntary groups/projects. Gender socialisation starts at birth and is reinforced throughout adult life. Clearly, what happens before secondary school is hugely significant in shaping boys' and girls' different educational paths. Similarly, for many, it is at university and beyond where different, gendered, working and caring patterns develop.

The focus in this section is largely on school and school-age boys and young men. While this is a definite limitation, it also reflects the fact that the vast majority of boys spend around 32 hours a week in school, and that unless the concerns about boys' education are addressed in schools, they will not be meaningfully addressed in other contexts. Recent research has also suggested that efforts to reduce gender differences in Higher Education participation should predominantly be aimed at improving the progress of young men prior to Higher Education.⁴⁵³

Developing masculinities in line with, and as part of, a broader social justice approach is important in itself, and is also an effective way to improve boys' educational experiences and achievements. In particular:

Boys need to be educated to be equal, to understand and believe in equality, including gender equality. The moral and practical arguments for equality need to be discussed and debated. By starting from boys' own experiences, including a recognition of their own feelings of powerlessness and/or power, this should also enable boys to understand the unequal relationships between boys and men, and the negative consequences inequalities cause. Here the experiences and insights of feminist struggles to gain gender equality will be invaluable, as will an approach that challenges boys to think through their behaviour, attitudes and values without 'blaming' them for their 'maleness'.

Boys need to be able to explore what being a boy and being a man means. Spaces need to be created in formal educational and other settings to address the constricting aspects of masculinity and explore what being a boy/man means, what it could mean, what boys/men (as well as girls/women) might want it to mean and what it should and should not mean. Challenging the 'laddish' culture in education, the peer group 'policing' of acceptable masculinities and the anti-education agenda of many boys will be

452. See, for example, Willis P. (1977) *Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs*, Farnborough: Saxon House, and Mac An Ghail M. (1994) *The making of men: Masculinities, sexualities and schooling*, Buckingham: OUP

453. Broeke S., Hamed J. (ibid.)

an essential part of this process. It will also be important to encourage boys to understand the economic and social structures that currently limit and influence the opportunities available to boys and men (e.g. in relation to parenting and other caring roles), and to empower them to reflect on how they want to respond to and overcome these constraints. Developing more emotional literacy and more caring, less destructive identities may well be desired, and boys talk about their sense that their friendships are often more superficial than those of girls.⁴⁵⁴ However, it is important not to be too prescriptive or judgmental about what kinds of masculinity are 'required' but to let boys genuinely explore and remake their own masculinity.

Girls and women, as well as boys and men, need to be involved in the whole process of addressing boys' educational issues. This is not only a men's issue or a boys' issue – but also an issue for all. A gender-sensitive approach, alive to the differing gender constructions of boys and girls, needs to be developed by all involved in education. Further, it is quite clear that girls are active in the construction of prevailing masculinity, and boys and girls need to be allies around remaking masculinity.⁴⁵⁶

The educational context and wider society will need to be reformed to make it more conducive to achieving greater gender equality and addressing the restrictive and problematic aspects of masculinity. A key aspect of this challenge for schools is attempting to engage actively with pupils' parents and communities around these issues.

Only with such a framework in mind are schools likely to address issues such as: bullying; homophobia; violence; literacy problems; gendered subject choices; boys' educational achievement within education; fathers' involvement in their children's education at school and elsewhere – and contribute to creating more secure, exciting, caring, non-violent men and boys in society generally.

Moving to greater gender equality and reconstructing masculinities, changing the ways in which boys and men live their lives, could only benefit girls and would inevitably occur alongside continuing developments in femininities too. This report is focusing on the educational needs of boys and men but there is plenty of evidence that, despite the concern with 'failing boys', girls' experiences in education are not all positive.⁴⁵⁷ The stresses and strains of achieving educationally and conforming to acceptable femininities can be severe for girls.

The legal and policy framework

'Action to challenge stereotyping needs to be a key component of the whole school curriculum and, in particular, careers, work-related learning, citizenship and personal, social and health education at both primary and secondary school. It is important that schools set a framework which tackles the many factors that affect pupil attainment, including gender, ethnicity, and social class. Schools also play a key role in shaping the values and attitudes of young people and should take a lead in challenging gender-based harassment, bullying and violence. If schools are to be at the forefront of promoting gender equality in terms of outcomes for pupils, they also need to be at the forefront of promoting gender equality for their workforce'.

Equal Opportunities Commission (2007) *Gender equality and schools: guidance for public authorities in England*

The 2007 Gender Equality Duty (see 'Men, boys and policy', page 34) has provided a new mechanism for addressing equality issues within educational institutions, with schools making up the largest proportion of public bodies covered by the Duty. Every school is required, among other things, to: prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme, showing how it intends to fulfil its duties and setting

454. Frosh S. et al. (ibid.)

455. Seidler makes clear that it is important to allow genuine exploration of identity and masculinity in Seidler V. (ibid.)

456. Becky Francis's work shows how girls and women are inevitably involved in the making of boys and men. See Francis (ibid.)

457. Epstein et al. (ibid.) note the stresses and strains of achieving and the testing regime on girls

out its gender equality objectives; consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap; gather and use information on how the school's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services; consult with key stakeholders (e.g. staff, governors, parents, pupils) and assess the impact of current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality. The actions set out in the Scheme should be implemented within three years, and schools must report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years. As yet, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the Duty in shifting policy and practice.

In responding to the statistics concerning boys' achievement, the current Government has certainly been active. When Labour came to power in 1997 they cited boy's 'under-achievement' as one of the biggest issues facing schools. Since 1998, Local Education Authorities have been required to produce strategies to improve boys' achievements. In 2000, Ofsted was required to include 'promoting boys' success' as one of the inspection criteria.⁴⁵⁸ The Government has also made it very clear that any educational policies targeted at boys should not be detrimental to girls. They have produced very detailed and accessible evidence about the current picture,⁴⁵⁹ commissioned research into why boys do less well than girls and how to develop strategies to try to improve boys' achievement,⁴⁶⁰ resulting in some clear policy suggestions.⁴⁶¹ There is an acknowledgement that the causes of the gender differences are complex, that boys' peer groups can be anti-education, and even that masculinities may need re-working towards a different, more caring identity.

Yet the narrow 'achievement issue' has been the main point of departure for research, policy development and educational strategies (though there has been some focus on sex education and occasionally emotional education too). It has shaped the context within which work in this area is happening – and its limited impact.

There are three main strands that can be identified in the current policy agenda:

1) Promoting Good Schools, positive educational practice: This approach simply states the need for general good educational practice: clear leadership; a positive ethos; good systems; clear lesson planning; good pedagogic practice; well-paced lessons; early intervention when trouble occurs; challenging bullying; challenging abuse; committed staff; and using the latest technology to aid teaching. The idea is that if standards can be 'driven up' generally and there is 'zero tolerance' for bad practice, even 'failing boys' will be switched on and achieve. While most educationalists could agree on much of the good practice outlined, it is only one version of good education, heavily influenced by the 'Effective Schools' agenda.⁴⁶² One problem with this is that the actual messy experience of children and young people and their relationships, their behaviour, their selves and their learning, gets in the way. Another is the educational and wider societal context within which such policies are being developed, as identified earlier.

2) Promoting 'boy-friendly' teaching approaches: There have been a range of strategies developed to try to improve boys' achievement, which stem from the view that boys need different teaching strategies and techniques to girls. These include: boys' literacy schemes; 'lads and dads' reading initiatives (such as The Breakthrough Project); dads watching quizzes or going to DIY stores with sons; more male 'mentors' in schools; 'real men read' campaigns; 'boy-friendly books'; use of ICT; short targets; short learning tasks; competition in class; using footballers as motivators/role models. These policies do seem to have some effect on boys' educational engagement (though whether this goes beyond simply the short-term positive effects expected, due to the boys receiving special attention, is debatable). But there is the danger that such policy initiatives may reflect a 'boys will be boys' philosophy, and so reinforce problematic aspects of

458. See <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/boys/boysgovt.html> for a summary of government initiatives in this area

459. DfES, *Gender and Education* (ibid.)

460. See Younger M., Warrington M. (2005) *Raising Boys' Achievement*, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, Research Report 636, DfES

461. See for example Gary Wilson's policy recommendations in Wilson G. (2007): *Raising Boys' Achievement*, London: Network Continuum and Wilson G. (2003) *Using the National Healthy School standard to Raise Boys' Achievement*, DfES

462. For a discussion of this agenda see Reed L.R. (1998) *Zero tolerance: gender performance and school failure*, in Epstein et al, *Failing Boys? Issues in Gender and Achievement*, Buckingham: OUP

masculinity.⁴⁶³ It is not clear, for example, that dads should read with sons more than with daughters or that positive male mentors are needed for boys more than girls.⁴⁶⁴

There is undoubtedly a real tension between meeting boys 'where they are currently at' and not wanting to reinforce some traditional masculinities. Boys need to be engaged with 'where they are at' or else nothing can change. Some policies that are targeted at boys' preferred learning styles, or engaging boys' at school, appear to treat all boys as having different (special) educational needs.⁴⁶⁵ But there are plenty of boys who read, write and concentrate as well as even the highest-achieving girls. Similarly, there are non-violent, emotionally literate, caring boys and men. This suggests that boys' learning styles may not, essentially, be all that different to girls'. There is a need to study the approaches and experiences of these boys and find out what is different' about them in comparison with other boys. Why, for example, do they do well without so-called 'boy-friendly' teaching or boys' reading schemes? Any boy-friendly policies adopted need to be self-consciously located within a broader gender equality project, as well as being aware of the assumptions they are making about what boys need and who they are.

3) Changing the socio-cultural environment: This approach is the least developed of the three. It accepts the need to challenge what is seen as the 'dominant', mainstream, 'laddish' masculinity in schools and the associated anti-school peer group. It argues that boys are more susceptible to peer group pressures and that a less 'macho' masculinity needs to be fostered within education. While this educational policy agenda rarely makes the connections between such a school-based boys 'laddish' culture and the wider educational and societal context, it is the expansion and extension of initiatives which seek to explore and challenge the cultures of masculinity within schools (and society generally) that would have most success in mainstreaming gender equality and developing more positive masculinities for boys and young men.

This approach could include: placing the exploration of identity, relationships and equality at the heart of sex education; involving students more in all educational processes, for example as part of 'Student Voice' projects and 'Action Research' around gender equality and gendered identity;⁴⁶⁶ revitalising sex education and developing government initiatives to focus more on sex and emotional education, for example by expanding the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative (see box below); teaching about gender equality and the damaging effects of inequality more generally in Citizenship, History and Social Science; exploring the risks associated with certain forms of masculinity within Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE); raising such issues in assemblies; instigating single-sex spaces for exploring gender identity. The educational research that listens to boys and young men discussing their masculinity, their lives, their hopes and their fears, demonstrates the vibrancy and energy with which they engage with such issues. These are clearly issues which they are motivated to explore.⁴⁶⁷

Current social policy initiatives are mainly from an 'Effective Schools' direction, with bits of the 'boy-friendly strategies' approach. Effective schools are important (although views differ on what 'effective' means). Strategies for engaging boys will be needed. Yet, in the long run, it is changing the socio-cultural educational context which is likely to be most valuable.

463. This philosophy is discussed in some detail in Epstein et al. (ibid.) and Francis B. (ibid.)

464. See argument on recuperative aspect of such ideas in Epstein et al. (ibid.)

465. Reed L.R. (1998) *Zero tolerance: gender performance and school failure*, in Epstein et al. (ibid.)

466. See the student voice work of Michael Fielding in, for example, Fielding M. (2001) *Students as Radical Agents of Change*, *Journal of Educational Change* 2 (3): 123-141

467. See Seidler V. (2006) *Young Men and Masculinities*, London: Zed Books; Frosh S. et al (2002) *Young Masculinities*, Basingstoke, Palgrave; Sewell T., *Loose canons: exploding the myth of the 'black mach' lad* in Epstein et al. (1998) *Failing Boys?*, Buckingham: OUP, and many of the contributions to Martino W. and Meyen B. (eds.) (2001) *What about the Boys?*, Buckingham: OUP

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) is a comprehensive programme to develop the social and emotional skills of all pupils, through:

- a whole-school approach to create the climate and conditions that implicitly promote the skills and allow these to be practised and consolidated;
- direct and focused learning opportunities for whole classes, across the curriculum, outside formal lessons and as part of small-group work;
- using learning and teaching approaches that support pupils to learn social and emotional skills and consolidate those already learnt; and
- continuing professional development for the whole staff of a school.

The skills are in five groupings: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. These skills underpin positive behaviour, regular attendance, learning, employability and well-being and have the potential to improve social mobility.

The skills SEAL seeks to promote are essential for children and young people to achieve all five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes. SEAL helps schools to create a safe and emotionally-healthy school environment where pupils can learn effectively. The skills are an important component of PSHCE and help pupils to be responsible citizens.

Primary SEAL is organised into seven themes using resources with built-in progression for each year group within a school. Secondary SEAL builds on the skills developed at primary school that are particularly relevant to meeting the challenges of exams, training and work. It is organised into three themes.

Available materials include a guidance booklet and a wide range of additional resources on the website (www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and CD-ROM.

Specific policy issues

Bullying

Bullying is a significant problem for boys in schools. Over 50 per cent of school children see bullying as a big problem and over half of nine to ten year old boys report having been bullied recently.⁴⁶⁸ Boys are more likely to bully and be bullied than girls. The Government's 'Every Child Matters' (2003) and 'Children's Plan' (2007) both state that children should have the right to be healthy and stay safe and free from harm. The Government has made children's well-being part of the inspection criteria. All schools are required to have whole-school anti-bullying policies, and the latest government policy document on bullying, including strategies on how to tackle it, is excellent.⁴⁶⁹ The Government has taken the issue seriously and produced policy statements, websites and helplines. Strategies such as 'buddy systems' as well as using celebrities and videos to convey anti-bullying messages have been promoted. Encouraging victims of bullying to use one of three strategies: avoidance, 'standing up' and friendship-support are advocated. All schools state that they do not tolerate bullying, but it still happens: from physical abuse to verbal taunting, evidence from both surveys and action research shows that it is not being effectively challenged.

One aspect is homophobic bullying. Stonewall has found that nearly two-thirds of young lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students have experienced bullying at school.⁴⁷⁰ For example, 'gay' has now become a ubiquitous, often general, sometimes mild, sometimes nasty, term of abuse but one that also often reflects and reinforces homophobic attitudes. The Government has recently

468. See Oliver C., Candappa M. (2003) *Tackling Bullying: Listening to the views of children and young people*, Nottingham: ChildLine/DfES

469. Oliver C., Candappa M., (ibid.)

470. Hunt R., Jensen J. (2007) *The School Report: The experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools*, London: Stonewall

reminded schools that they have a legal duty to take steps to tackle homophobic bullying. But anti-homophobic policies, like anti-bullying policies, will have little effect unless they go beyond excellent policy statements, one-off assemblies and mission statements to engage seriously with the prevalent environment in schools. Spaces within education for exploring the way boys are and the effects of homophobia need to be developed as outlined above.

Sex and relationships education

Boys tend to be less well-informed than girls about sex and relationships and about contraception. Only 48 per cent of boys report having been told 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' about sex and relationships by their parents; boys are less likely than girls to obtain information from their friends (43 per cent of boys compared to 56 per cent of girls) and magazines and newspapers (26 per cent of boys compared to 52 per cent of girls). Yet boys are often influential in deciding which form of contraception, if any, is used.⁴⁷¹

Sex and relationships education is a potentially valuable educational space that could contribute to exploring masculinity (and masculinities) and associated risks and opportunities for both boys and girls. Despite sex education, teenage pregnancy rates are still the highest in Europe and many young people claim sex education is a fairly hopeless, marginalised, often purely 'functional' activity in schools. The well intentioned 'non-judgmental' philosophy underpinning much of this work leads to sex education largely being about giving children facts about pregnancy, contraceptives and sexually transmitted diseases. This does not enable them to explore their emotions, relationships, aspirations and identities in any meaningful way. Nor does it encourage thinking about sexuality, sexual inequalities and social justice in sexual and/or personal relationships. Boys need to be helped to identify and respect their own feelings and to explore their visions for their long-term future.

They need to learn, amongst other things, the importance of respect for women in relationships and the unacceptability of and damage that violence to women causes. Research on young people's attitudes to sex, violence and relationships highlights just how essential this is. One study explored the understanding and attitudes of over 1,300 children aged eight to 16 to domestic violence and revealed disturbing trends that suggest work in schools to address this issue must start at a very early age. Teenage boys in particular had worrying attitudes. Over 75 per cent of 11-12 year old boys thought that women get hit if they make men angry, and more boys than girls, of all ages, believed that some women deserve to be hit. Boys aged 13-14 were even less clear that men should take responsibility for their violence. Boys of all ages, particularly teenagers, have less understanding than girls of who is at fault, and are more likely to excuse the perpetrator⁴⁷² (see section on 'Violence', page 123).

Educational programmes to tackle violence

Womankind have developed an education programme which is available for use in schools (www.womankind.org.uk). The Westminster Domestic Violence Forum has developed domestic violence materials for use in primary and secondary schools. The second series of the 'Watch over me' video for secondary schools produced by Miss Dorothy.com addresses the issues of domestic violence within the classroom. The video follows a soap opera format with credible characters who young people can relate to. In addition, the National Union of Teachers has published a pamphlet on domestic violence with information about why there needs to be a focus on preventive work in schools, how domestic violence can be tackled through the curriculum and what schools can do to challenge gender stereotypes, as well as making the links to child protection and safeguarding children.

Local Government Association (2005) *Implementing the new domestic violence Best Value Performance Indicators*, www.lga.gov.uk

471. Equal Opportunities Commission (2007) *Gender equality and schools: guidance for public authorities in England*

472. Similar findings were revealed by a study of young people aged 16-21 by Burton S., Kitzinger J., Kelly L., Regan L. (1998) *Young Peoples' Attitudes towards Sex, Violence and Relationships*, Edinburgh: Zero Tolerance Trust

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHCE) should also be broadened to include a focus on preparing the next generation of fathers (and mothers) – and to begin a dialogue with boys and girls about their future role as parents – as Ofsted reports have suggested.⁴⁷³ This should not be restricted to PSHCE, but also integrated into other aspects of the mainstream curriculum.

It is unlikely that such education could be routinely facilitated by regular school staff – as currently defined. However, it is equally unlikely that it will happen in anything other than a piecemeal way outside of school. One policy recommendation should be, in conjunction with a realignment of the curriculum content and time allocated to different learning at school, to broaden teacher training to train Sex and Relationship specialists just as there are Maths specialists.

There have been recent developments which could be extended: the SEAL initiative which seeks to introduce social and emotional aspects of education and learning into PSHCE is useful (see box above). Citizenship education can be used to address issues of sexual and relationship responsibilities. This is an area where some single-sex work may be valuable and some exploration of masculinity may be possible. There is some evidence of small-scale good practice including discussion and drama workshops.⁴⁷⁴

Building Bridges

Working With Men's 'Building Bridges' project, funded by the Department of Health, sought to demonstrate how targeted work in schools can improve young men's engagement with Sex and Relationships Education (SRE). The aim was to develop an integrated approach to work with young men, both through targeted SRE sessions in schools and within sexual health and contraceptive services. A series of sessions and materials⁴⁷⁵ were developed through pilots in four Bristol schools, delivered to about 100 young men in Years 9, 10, and 11; these consisted of six one-hour sessions covering communication in relationships, 'being a man', risk-taking (including sexually transmitted infections), accessing services and reflecting on values, attitudes and knowledge.

The young men found the emphasis on learning and practising practical skills useful and enjoyable. Active learning – 'doing rather than watching', using learning agreements and asking the young men for feedback – helped them to engage. The approach and skills of workers – including a positive attitude to young men and treating them with respect, and good group management skills – were essential to the success of the work. The work on access to services highlighted the importance of relationships and trust between young men and 'gatekeepers' (e.g. teachers, mentors, youth workers). Location of services was also critical to young men's willingness to attend.

Davidson N. (2003) *Building Bridges: Integrating school sex and relationships education and contraceptive services for young men*, London: Working With Men

Raising boys' achievement

There have undoubtedly been many micro-initiatives aimed at classroom practice, resources and whole-school strategies which have had some effect. There have been some strategies advocated to change boys' anti-school culture, such as getting 'peer-leaders' on side when trying to promote learning and education as acceptable for boys.⁴⁷⁶ There have been attempts to get dads and male mentors involved in boys' education, and a range of literacy projects such as 'Real Men Read', which have had some success. A recent document, 'Boys into Books 11-14', supported by the Department

473. Ofsted (2005) *Personal, social and health education in secondary schools*, HMI 2311

474. Wilson G. (2007) *Raising Boys' Achievement*, Network Continuum, and Bearne E., Warrington M. (2003) *Raising boys achievement*, Literacy Today (issue 35)

475. E.g. A 'Building Bridges' pack and game

476. See Wilson G. (2006) *Breaking through Barriers to Boys' Achievement: developing a caring masculinity*, Network Continuum

for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) offers a reading list for boys and ideas about how to make the library a 'cool' place to be for boys. Schools have tried 'Bring your dad to school days' to involve men in their children's education.

All such strategies have potential strengths and potential drawbacks. For example, encouraging boys to read is obviously positive, but should they read 'boys' books' because boys are different to girls and so need to read different books? Isn't this unfair on boys, denying them the chance to develop their emotional literacy? Do boys need to be switched on to reading through 'boys' books' and then carefully steered away from such limited, gendered reading? This debate is complicated and reflects the uncertainty about how we want boys and men to be and what gender equality means. The view that aspects of boys' gender development are limiting warns against over-emphasis on specific strategies to target boys.

As argued earlier, the key is to help boys explore what a successful life as a boy and man might look like, and so provide them with reasons and ways to succeed at school that they feel good about. The nature of 'male' employment has changed. A range of societal changes, including the emergence of feminism, have brought more confidence and motivation for girls. Boys of all classes and ethnicities need to imagine positive, exciting futures. They need to work out a way of growing up as men that they feel good about, and that enables them to have more equal relationships with each other and with girls and women. There has been very little work of this kind in schools.

The numbers of male teachers

Men make up 44 per cent of all secondary school teachers, but only 16 per cent of all primary school teachers. On average, English primary schools have only three male teachers, and one in ten do not have any men on the teaching staff at all. It is often argued that increasing the numbers of male teachers in schools – particularly primary schools – will improve discipline and achievement and provide 'positive male role models' for boys.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that men are more successful than women at engaging boys and young men, or that only they can do so. Although an increase in the numbers of male primary teachers would be welcome, the real issue is not how many there are, but who they are and what they do in the school. Ideally, male teachers can work alongside female colleagues to reduce the pressures on boys to conform to the narrow notions of masculinity – 'be tough', 'be independent', 'compete', and so on – that often come to dominate their lives. Alongside efforts to recruit self-aware men, this requires schools to provide opportunities for reflection and debate for all staff, and to make the promotion of gender equality central to their ethos.⁴⁷⁷

The school curriculum

There are two main issues with regards to the curriculum that need addressing. The first, and most important, is that there needs to be a much more central space – ideally within the mainstream curriculum – for personal, social, emotional, moral and political education in terms of time, teacher training, status and resource allocation.

As has been discussed, this part of the curriculum should involve learning about gender inequality, social justice and the risks and problems associated with current masculinities (and femininities). Citizenship, PSHCE, SEAL and moral and social education need to be much more central to the curriculum.

The issue of violence against women should also be in the national curriculum; research by Ellis⁴⁷⁸ on initiatives in educational settings found 73 local authorities had programmes (of varying lengths)

477. For discussion of analogous issues in relation to nursery schools, see Cameron C., Moss P., Owen C., (1999), *Men in the Nursery: gender and caring work*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing

478. Ellis J. (2004) *Preventing Violence against Women and Girls: A Study of Educational Programmes*, London; Womankind

in operation in 2004 (see section on 'Violence' page 123), the most common pattern being six one-hour sessions with PSHCE. Some programmes promoted a whole school approach and made links to other education initiatives such as social inclusion and bullying, but how and to what extent individual schools embedded the work was unclear. The research also found that programmes were financed from a number of different sources, almost all short-term. This made the programmes insecure and potentially unsustainable.

Secondly, it is important to be aware of the gendered choices in education. There are persistent differences in subject choices between girls and boys. Girls tend to favour the Humanities and Human Sciences, with boys favouring Maths, Physics, Business and Computing. The national curriculum is currently not heavily gendered for pupils before they reach the age of 14 (though current attempts to give boys their own learning styles and materials may change this). But once options kick in, traditional gender choices are still very much in evidence. There have been some very good initiatives around Science which have succeeded in increasing girls' participation somewhat, especially in single-sex schools. These could be learnt from, and equivalent strategies developed, to encourage different choices for boys. Boys can not be forced into 'female' subjects but can be engaged with to broaden their horizons.

The choices young men and women make in school affect the kind of jobs, careers and worlds that they will inhabit. Guidance for schools on implementing the Gender Equality Duty⁴⁷⁹ argues that schools have a key role to play in promoting non-stereotypical choices in the 14-19 curriculum. It suggests it is essential to ensure that young people have access to up-to-date information about sector workplaces and occupations, and to provide 'taster' sessions to give young people an opportunity to try out an area of learning before making their option choices (see 'Work', page 45).

'Relationships without fear'

The 'Relationships without fear' programme, developed in Stoke-on-Trent, provides young people with the opportunity to explore attitudes and beliefs which may contribute to abusive relationships. It encourages young people to look at rules and boundaries and examine early warning signs as well as providing information on where to go for help and support. The programme looks at different forms of abuse and stereotyping. In doing so, it aims to empower young people to be confident and to avoid, or address, abusive relationships. It equips educators to raise issues surrounding domestic violence.

'Relationships without fear' is designed so that it can be adapted to meet the individual requirements of schools or other settings. It follows a progressive reinforcement from Year Groups 4-11, building as the children move through the school. It is also mapped to aspects of the PSHCE and other curriculum subjects. Delivery is carefully monitored. This approach has proved extremely successful in affecting a positive attitudinal change to domestic violence by young people, as well as impacting on health and education outcomes.

To build sustainability and cost-effectiveness, the programme has evolved from being purely a direct delivery project to adopting a whole school approach. Basic awareness and information training is offered to all staff, while key staff are identified and trained to implement the programme. Experienced domestic abuse professionals offer on going support to school staff, and monitor delivery as well as providing individual support for pupils through a dedicated children and young persons' support worker. Additional support is in place through multi-agency links.

Local Government Association (2005) *Implementing the new domestic violence Best Value Performance Indicators*, www.lga.gov.uk

479. Equal Opportunities Commission (ibid.)

Extra-curricular activities (including sport)

Part of engaging with boys' (and girls') needs more would involve offering them a broader, more enjoyable educational experience through, for instance: more school orchestras, plays and productions, sports teams and outdoor trips. Educational experience needs to be widened away from a 'skills' and 'value-added' agenda towards a broader liberal-arts education. It is often only private schools, with their unequal access to resources, that provide the full range of extra-curricular activities which are so important to fostering positive personal development for boys (and girls).⁴⁸⁰

Within this extra-curricular context the relationship between sport and masculinity is particularly pertinent and controversial. Sport has long been seen as a site for encouraging and reproducing problematic masculinities. There is evidence and research to suggest that aspects of sporting culture reinforce some oppressive and damaging aspects of masculinity.⁴⁸¹ This has been most extensively explored in the context of men's involvement in football (both as participant and audience) but is also apparent in other sporting activity. It is important here to examine the different functions and effects sport has for boys and men with different masculinities; it has been argued, for instance, that over-emphasis on football can exclude some boys (e.g. those from particular minorities or who are disabled).⁴⁸²

The positive aspects of sport for boys and men also need to be acknowledged: physical pleasure, building relationships, friendships and connection with other boys and men, and the physical health benefits, are all valuable. Involvement in sport can be a useful, pragmatic way of addressing masculinity issues with boys and men who are alienated from mainstream services.⁴⁸³ It can be argued that it is not football or sport that is the problem – few seem to think girls' football is a bad idea – it is the associated, often 'hyper-masculine' behaviour, and the type of boys' and men's friendships they can generate, that can be problematic. This is to do with the symbolic place which team sports have in cementing many boys' and men's identities. Alternative ways of getting physical exercise and enjoying sport could be promoted for boys, as well as exploring how to go beyond more superficial, 'bantering' friendships between men and boys.⁴⁸⁴ In practice, although some early programmes (such as the YMCA's 'Dads and Lads') seldom moved beyond a focus on football to explore relationship and parenting issues,⁴⁸⁵ a recent evaluation of the second phase of this programme suggests considerable progress. For instance, mothers and daughters have been involved, and fathers are accessing programmes for a variety of reasons, including a desire to take on more childcare.⁴⁸⁶

Fathers' involvement in schools

Schools already have a responsibility to work with the fathers of the children currently attending: engaging with these men and creating a setting where they are welcomed, feel comfortable in and choose to go. It is now widely recognised that schools need to communicate proactively with fathers as well as mothers; be sensitive to the experiences and needs of non-resident fathers; organise school and extended school activities at times that fathers could easily attend; and so on. There is evidence that engaging fathers with schools has a significant impact upon educational outcomes for boys and girls, and on the environment and attitudes being reinforced in schools.⁴⁸⁷

480. For example, Anthony Seldon, Head of the (private) Brighton College, has claimed that what makes 'independent' schools great is their extra-curricular opportunities. See discussion between Seldon and Adam Swift in *Prospect* (87), June 2003

481. Michael Gard discusses this in Martino et al (2001)

482. Frosh S. et al. (ibid.)

483. Featherstone B., Rivett M., Scourfield J. (2007) *Working with Men in Health and Social Care*, London: SAGE

484. See Martino W. et al (ibid.) and Frosh S. et al (ibid.) on the superficiality of many male, especially sporting, friendships

485. Lloyd T. (2001) *What Works with Fathers?*, London: Working With Men

486. Bartlett D., Featherstone B., Manby M., Jones K. (2006) Evaluation of YMCA 'Dads and Lads' programmes, www.ymca.org.uk

487. Goldman R. (ibid.)

Recommendations

The Government should take steps to implement the measures set out in the 2007 Council of Europe recommendation on 'gender mainstreaming in education'.⁴⁸⁸ This should involve reviewing existing legislation and practices, developing mechanisms throughout the education system for promoting and implementing gender mainstreaming and monitoring and evaluating progress on a regular basis.

The measures set out in the Gender Equality Duty provide a significant opportunity – and requirement – for schools to tackle inequality issues, and in particular to explore and understand the differences between boys' and girls' experiences, attitudes and achievements, and to develop effective policy and practice in response. These requirements should form an important part of how Ofsted assesses the equality obligations of schools.

The importance of personal, social, moral and political education should be recognised and significantly strengthened within schools and other educational institutions. In particular, PSHCE (and within this, the social and emotional aspects of education and learning) should be made statutory during Key Stages 1-4.

School curricula should be reviewed critically and developed at every Key Stage to address gender equality. This should involve a positive commitment to expanding boys' gender identities, and tackling how gender constrains boys as well as girls.

Concerted and planned programmes should be developed in schools to educate boys about the need for respect within relationships and towards women and girls more generally, and to ensure they understand that violence against women and girls (and each other) is unacceptable. Education on emotional well-being, building healthy relationships and on tackling violence should be embedded across the curriculum.

Boys and young men should be provided with opportunities within school and community contexts to learn the skills required for caring and domestic work (including parenting effectively and co-operatively), and to explore and develop the place of caring roles in their lives.

Equality specialists should be appointed to work with schools to mainstream gender equality and to highlight and assist them in addressing areas of concern which specifically affect boys, such as anti-school peer-group pressure, as well as issues which specifically affect girls.

'Gender sensitive' male teachers and male teaching assistants should be actively recruited into primary schools, particularly at junior levels. Programmes for teachers should be developed on gender equity issues and the needs of boys.

Male volunteers (including fathers and father figures) should be encouraged to come into schools far more, to talk about their lives and engage with their children's education. Schools should ensure that their policies for parental involvement effectively reach and include men, including non-resident fathers.

Sports groups should be encouraged to promote positive attitudes to gender equality among boys, and offer alternative ways of being a boy/young man.

It is important to develop, evaluate and disseminate examples and awareness of micro-teaching practice/strategies that are gender sensitive, engaging boys in learning (especially reading), while recognising the need for such strategies not to reinforce traditional masculinities.

488. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on gender mainstreaming in education, 1,006th meeting, 10 October 2007