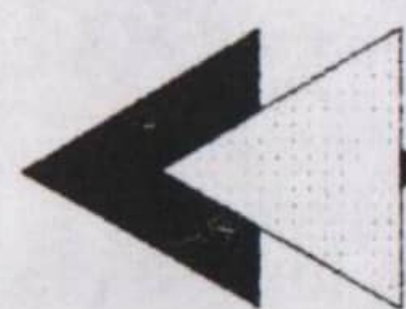


School's Out!



working for lesbian and gay equality in education

No 8

November 1995

Newsletter

New group for London

At the School's Out national conference on 28 October, a new group was launched for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people working or otherwise involved in education in and around London.

Since School's Out was formed in 1994, we have encouraged the creation of local groups. There are now affiliated lesbian, gay and bisexual groups in the East Midlands, Avon, Birmingham and Leeds. The East Midlands group, *Pink Chalk*, has been running almost as long as School's Out and has made a great success of its regular meetings where invited speakers and discussion groups provide the main focus.

Until now, although most School's Out national organising meetings are held in London, there has not been any group focusing directly on the capital. Now there is.

Unnamed as yet (School's Out in London?), the group will meet for the first time on **Friday 1 December at the Institute of Education, Russell Square, WC1 at 6.30pm - Room 604**. The meeting will begin with a series of five-minute presentations of personal coming out experiences from four or five invited speakers. This will lead into a discussion about some of the issues raised and then a short session to plan what the new group might do over the coming months - and how to organise it.

At the end of the meeting (7.30-8pm) we will adjourn to a local pub or bar (probably the Drill Hall) to continue our

Inside Conference Report

School's Out held its Annual Conference on Saturday 28 October. Inside you will find a report on the main issues raised during the day, as well as some feedback from each of the workshops.

Membership Survey

Two major contentious issues were raised at Conference: the place (or not) of bisexuals in School's Out, and the issue of whether the name of the organisation properly reflects our serious goals. Please take the time to phone up and let the new committee know your views on both issues so that it can try to find a fair way of tackling them.

Membership Application Form

talking in an even more informal setting. Those who wish to turn up for just one or other part of the evening - please do.

If you are coming to the meeting at the Institute of Education first, the room will be advertised in the building as a "Women's Studies/School's Out" seminar. Don't let it confuse you. Just head for Room 604.

... and for Brum

At the first Birmingham NUT General Meeting of this term, a new Lesbian and Gay motion was passed unanimously.

The motion had been adapted from the national School's Out motion to make it relevant to Birmingham's requirements. It enables us to set up an ad hoc sub committee in Birmingham which will be used to serve the needs of all lesbian and gay teachers in the city. The sub committee will also be used to influence Birmingham NUT's policies, to make them more supportive to gay and lesbian people in education.

Birmingham NUT has now guaranteed to circulate School's Out literature to schools and has sponsored delegates to the annual School's Out conference. Also, the association will be sending a donation to School's Out.

The new group for lesbian and gay teachers will meet on the last Wednesday of each month at **8pm in the Fox, Lower Essex Street, Birmingham**. Please phone Sarah on 0121 444 3746.

Julie Bungey

And an older group

Pink Chalk is the oldest of our regional affiliates, having been set up roughly simultaneously with School's Out. It is very active and well organised and principally covers the East Midlands and South Yorkshire, although it has drawn several people in from further out.

Pink Chalk meetings are always well attended - phone Anthony on (0115) 958 5814 for more details about the group or its meetings. This is their diary for the coming months:

11 Nov LBG Centre, 45 King St, Leicester

9 Dec International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd, Nottingham

13 Jan, 24 Feb, 23 Mar, 20 Apr, 18 May, 15 Jun, 13 Jul - venues to be announced

Conference Report

About fifty people attended the 1995 **School's Out** Conference at ULU on 28 October. A mixture of constructive discussion and the occasional flash of more heated debate seemed to make for a positive and forward looking meeting.

The high spot for many was the surprise appearance of Jane Brown, head of Kingsmead school, to answer questions and then lead a workshop on the lessons to be learned from her experiences. The other keynote speaker, Peter Purton, gave those of us struggling to make the NUT a more lesbian & gay friendly place cause for hope. Peter is the Equal Opportunities Officer for the further education union, NATFHE. The union has already put in place many of the things that **School's Out** is demanding of the NUT - proof that education unions can be proactive on lesbian and gay issues.

Key Points

Harassment Guidelines

The workshop on harassment talked about what should go into a future **School's Out** document giving guidance to lesbian and gay teachers. The draft of the document is now under discussion. If you would like a copy of the draft, phone Geof on (0171) 582 2325.

School's Out - The best name?

A number of members suggested that **School's Out** was not an appropriate name for the organisation on the grounds that (a) it sounds too flippant, (b) it's an Americanism and (c) it sounds like an "in joke". The debate on the issue was quite polarised with several speakers adamant that the current name was fine - and pointing out the difficulties associated with altering the name of a relatively new organisation. An alternative viewpoint supported by some present was that **School's Out** could be used as a general campaigning name, but that we should seek an alternative name which we would use for more "official" communication - eg with government departments, etc. A fourth possibility was to amend our logo, "**working for lesbian and gay equality in education**", so that it could be used as an alternative name in this kind of communication.

Please do phone in your point of view (see Membership Survey on opposite page).

Bisexuality

The question of whether **School's Out** should include bisexuals in the name of the organisation, and/or make it clear in our publicity that we consider that bisexuals have a place in **School's Out**, is one which has been raised a number of times since our launch. One of the reasons why **Pink Chalk** initially sought to distance itself from **School's Out** was because it wished to be more explicit in welcoming bisexual people.

There were bisexual people at the Conference who complained that it was unclear to them whether they were welcome or not. **School's Out** does have bisexual members.

The accusation of lack of clarity seems fair: although **School's Out** did decide at its first committee meeting to use only the term "lesbian and gay" in publicity, we do not state anywhere that only lesbians and gay men may join (we don't even state that straight people may not!)

There seem to be three possible positions (though members may think of others!)

- 1 **School's Out** continues to use the term "lesbian and gay" in publicity and states explicitly that only "lesbians and gay men" may join or attend meetings.
- 2 **School's Out** adopts the term "lesbian, gay and bisexual" in all publicity.
- 3 **School's Out** adopts the term "lesbian, gay and bisexual" in publicity and agrees a code of practice which seeks to define and prohibit behaviour or topics of discussion which may be unacceptable to those attending meetings. This may appear horribly bureaucratic, but there apparently are organisations which have successfully taken this route.

Again, please do respond to the Membership Survey to register your views.

Workshop Reports

Harassment

This workshop looked at the main fears of harassment which lesbian and gay teachers have, and compared them to our experiences and the experiences of our friends and colleagues.

From this we tried to create the basis of a document to give guidance to teachers either faced with, or concerned about, harassment from pupils, parents, school management or colleagues. Examples of the latter were by far the most common.

It is hoped that a final version of the guidelines will be ready sometime in the new year.

Women

This workshop discussed a great number of issues raised by the women who attended. Among other things, it was decided to start up a telephone network for lesbian teachers. Phone Sue on 0171 635 0476 for details.

Equal Opportunities Policies

This workshop talked about good practice in equal opportunities and what, from a lesbian & gay perspective, should be in them.

It is hoped that **School's Out** will be publishing a model policy based on the ideas generated by the workshop.

Good Practice in USA, Canada and New Zealand

Alex McLead reports: In a well known San Francisco high school, a drama class in Grade 9 - equivalent to year ten - acts a play in which a young man tells his father he is gay - but it's twelve plays really, because the coming out scene is played twelve different times with a different outcome each time. In one, Dad says, "That's great son, so am I." In another, Dad dies of a heart attack.

When we feel discouraged, sometimes, because lesbian and gay issues are virtually invisible in our school curriculum, it's good to find exciting ventures in other countries. There are plenty if you have time to seek them out.

In this workshop we read the 'coming out' play. Some were keen to try it in their schools, but others thought it included too much violence. We looked at an excellent programme for the whole of the state of Massachusetts. It has powerful official support. We also discussed workshop material, on coming to terms with all sexualities, from New Zealand, where the age of consent for all is 16, human rights are protected and many schools use these workshops.

The city of Toronto has organised one of its schools as a place where young gays and lesbians are welcomed and encouraged. Is there such a school here?

Life After Kingsmead

Sue Sanders from the Kingsmead Support Group and Jane Brown led this workshop which sought to draw positive lessons from the experiences of the staff of an ordinary inner-city school suddenly pushed onto the front pages of a homophobic press.

There was a lot of agreement that a repeat of such viciousness was less likely given the way that the school community stood up for their head. There was also some relief that most parents at the school had put Jane's abilities as a head before the issues of her sexuality.

One thing was very clear. There is much that lesbian and gay

teachers can do in schools to counter homophobia, but the transformation of our straight colleagues, of our unions and ultimately of the law is also needed to properly protect us and to make real anti-heterosexist teaching a reality.

Images of Masculinity

Debbie Epstein led this workshop which looked at the links between "normative" masculinity, homophobia and sexism, drawing both on case studies and on the experiences of the participants.

What is clear is that homophobia and sexism cannot be effectively countered without challenging masculinity as it is constructed in our schools and wider society.

Who will write the History of Lesbian & Gay History of the 90s?

The National Lesbian and Gay Survey is ten years old and looking for new volunteers to help record what life is like for lesbians and gay men in Britain today.

Volunteers contribute a written or taped report of their opinions, memories and experiences on a different theme every three months. Contributions form part of a large archive available to researchers - all contributions are anonymous.

If you might be interested, write to **NLGS, 20 Park Street, Totterdown, BRISTOL BS4 3NL**

Membership Survey

Please consider your point of view on the two issues set out under **Key Points**, opposite. Then phone **0171 582 2325** and leave a message. All calls will be collated and passed on to the School's Out committee who will take the views expressed into account when deciding how to proceed.

You can choose from the options given below - or give your own opinion if it is not printed. If there is anything you'd like to add on any other aspects of the work of School's Out, please feel free to do so.

1. Our Name (currently **School's Out - working for lesbian and gay equality in education**)

- a) Keep the name as it is.
- b) Seek to change the name to something more "professional" sounding
- c) Keep **School's Out**, but find a new alternative name for work with official bodies
- d) Keep **School's Out**, but give more emphasis to the "working for lesbian & gay equality in education" logo

2. Bisexuality

- a) Keep all publicity the same and make it clear that bisexuals are not welcome to join or participate in the organisation
- b) Keep all publicity the same, but make it clear that bisexuals are welcome to join and participate in the organisation - within a code of conduct to set out what is and what is not appropriate behaviour/ subjects of discussion
- c) Change all publicity to say lesbian, gay and bisexual, but agree a code of conduct as above
- d) Change all publicity to say lesbian, gay and bisexual

School's Out Membership Application Form

Individual/organisation details - please use capital letters.

Organisations please give day-time telephone no.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Banker's Order

To the manager, _____ Bank,

Bank address: _____

Bank Sort Code: _____

Account Name: _____

Account Number: _____

Please pay to Girobank (72-00-15),
A/C No: 588161403, for the credit of School's Out,
the sum of £5/£12* immediately, and annually until
cancelled. (*DELETE AS APPLICABLE)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Individual Membership

Annual Subscription: waged £12 Low waged/unwaged £5

Please circle appropriate categories:

Student Teacher P/T Teacher F/T Teacher
Support Staff Other, please specify _____

Primary Secondary Further
Higher Special

Male Female

Union/Professional Association: _____

Where did you hear about School's Out? _____

Do you wish to receive agendas and minutes of
organising committee meetings? Yes No

Organisation/Group Affiliation

Please circle appropriate category

Fee

National trades union or other organisation £100

Local trades union/ local students union £50

Local lesbian and gay education group/voluntary organisation Affiliation
entitles organisations to participate as observers in School's Out meetings/
conferences and to receive the newsletter and other information.

Please enclose a cheque for 1 year's affiliation (payable to School's Out)
or fill out the standing order mandate (left) and send the whole of the
membership application form back to us (BM School's Out, London
WC1N 3XX), not your bank.

Local News

School's Out is a national organisation which actively encourages the formation of local lesbian & gay education groups which may, if they wish, affiliate to School's Out nationally. Whether you wish to become formally involved with School's Out or not, send us details of your meetings and events and we will happily publish them in future newsletters and pass contact names and addresses to new School's Out members in your area.

Pink Chalk

E Midlands/S Yorkshire. Contact Anthony on (0115) 958 5814.

School's Out in Avon

Avon. Contact Kate on (0225) 314 375

Birmingham group (no name as yet)

Birmingham and area. Contact Sarah on (0121) 444 3746.

London group (no name as yet)

London and area. Contact Geof on (0171) 582 2325.

National Support Lines

Phone Sue: (0171) 635 0476 or
John: (0181) 685 9429



We would welcome letters, articles, illustrations and all other contributions for future issues of the newsletter.

Send all correspondence to BM School's Out, London, WC1N 3XX.

Diary Dates

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Sat 25 Nov | School's Out Committee Meeting Meet at The Angel, Graham Street, Islington, London, 12.30-1.30 pm. Meeting nearby 1.30-3.30 pm.
<i>First meeting of the new national committee. Sorting out priorities and responsibilities for the coming year. All members are welcome to attend. Phone John on (0181) 685 9429 for details or with apologies.</i> |
| Wed 29 Nov | Birmingham Lesbian & Gay Teachers' Group The Fox, Lower Essex Street, Birmingham, 8pm.
<i>Please phone Sarah on (0121) 444 3746.</i> |
| Sat 9 Dec | Pink Chalk International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd, Nottingham.
<i>Regular monthly meeting. Details from Anthony on (0115) 958 5814.</i> |
| Fri 1 Dec | School's Out London Room 604, Institute of Education, Russell Square, WC1, 6.30pm.
<i>First meeting of a new lesbian, gay & bisexual education group for London. See front page article.</i> |
| Sun 3 Dec | School's Out in Avon The Watershed, Bristol, 4pm.
<i>Social event.</i> |
| Sat 13 Jan | Pink Chalk Venue to be decided.
<i>Regular monthly meeting. Details from Anthony on (0115) 958 5814.</i> |
| Mon 15 Jan | School's Out in Avon 7.30pm.
<i>A chance to talk & discussion on a chosen theme. Details from Peter on (0117) 9422300.</i> |