The most successful interventions are those embedded within a positive ethos and culture. Practitioners can support children and young people in responding to bullying by role modelling what is acceptable and taking the time to allow a child to understand the effects of certain language.

**RESPONDING TO ‘THAT’S SO GAY’ — CREATING UNDERSTANDING IN PRIMARY SETTINGS**

**STEP ONE – LEARNING: EXPLAIN WHAT IT MEANS**
“The word gay is used to describe a boy who loves another boy or girl who loves another girl, not to mean something is bad or that you don’t like it.”

**STEP TWO – EMPATHY: EXPLAIN THE IMPACT ON LGBT PEOPLE**
“What message do you think gay people might hear when you use the word like this? What about kids who have 2 mums or 2 dads or family members who are gay? How might it make them feel?”

**STEP THREE – CREATE BOUNDARIES**
Set up the boundaries: explain the anti-bullying policy, what is not tolerated, and the possible consequences.

**RESPONSES TO ‘THAT’S SO GAY’**

Although young learners might not know what they are saying or what the word means, they are learning there is a connection between the word ‘gay’ and ‘bad’ or ‘rubbish’. Be clear that is unacceptable and has a negative impact when used to mean something is bad. You could say:

“Using the word ‘gay’ to tease someone is bullying and is unacceptable. If it happens again I will report it as bullying.”

“You may not have meant to be hurtful, but when you use the word ‘gay’ to mean something is bad or stupid, it is hurtful.” **Follow-up:** “Do you know why it is hurtful?”

“It’s not OK to use ‘gay’ to mean something is bad.” **Follow-up:** “Do you know why?”

“Remember, we don’t use put-downs in this class.”

“Even if you didn’t mean to offend people who are gay, it is offensive to call this task gay; if you don’t like something, then say you don’t like it.”

“Do you know what ‘gay’ means?”

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