



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TOOLKIT

PREVENTING AND TACKLING SOGIESC-BASED BULLYING
AND ANTI-RIGHTS DISCOURSE IN SCHOOLS

Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education

Tool 2



IGLYO

Co-funded
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented
by the Council of Europe

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IGLYO (2026). Inclusive Education Toolkit: Preventing and Tackling SOGIESC-based Bullying and Anti-Rights Discourse in Schools. *Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education*.

The publication has been developed by IGLYO, with the financial support of the European Union and the Council of Europe in the framework of the EU-CoE joint project “Combating anti-LGBTIQ violence and hate speech and strengthening awareness raising and fact-based narratives about LGBTIQ persons”. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author(s). Views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union or the Council of Europe.

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1. Introduction



1.1. About this Tool

This framework (🟢 **Tool 2**) is part of a set of three complementary tools developed by the Council of Europe Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Unit in cooperation with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex Youth & Student Organisation (IGLYO), under the EU-Council of Europe Joint Project entitled “Combating anti-LGBTIQ violence and hate speech and strengthening awareness-raising and fact-based narratives about LGBTIQ persons.”

The tools were co-developed through two working group meetings bringing together policymakers, education professionals, and civil society representatives, with the aim of supporting more coherent, sustainable, and context-sensitive approaches to SOGIESC-inclusive education across the Council of Europe region.

The three tools are:



✿ **Tool 1: Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools**, which provides structural and institutional foundations for safe and inclusive school environments;

🟢 **Tool 2: Countering Anti-Rights Discourse in Education**, which builds resilience against disinformation, polarisation and hostile narratives;

📖 **Tool 3: Framework for the Development of a Training Module on SOGIESC for Educators**, which supports the design and implementation of competence-based educator training on LGBTIQ-inclusive schools and curricula.

An introductory 📖 **Tool 0: Framework, Principles, and Guidance** also outlines how to understand and use the Inclusive Education Toolkit as a coherent whole.

Together, the three tools form a coherent package that links policy frameworks, narrative resilience, and educator competences into a systemic approach to advancing SOGIESC-inclusive education.

This tool (● **Tool 2**) focuses on school-level responses to anti-rights discourse, supporting educators and school leaders to uphold inclusive and democratic education in the face of polarisation and coordinated misinformation and disinformation campaigns.

1.2. Purpose of this Tool

The goal of this tool is to translate a wide-ranging evidence base into classroom-ready, context-sensitive, and rights-affirming practices that can be used across diverse European school environments. It aims to:



Educator confidence

Strengthen educators' confidence in facilitating inclusive, critically engaged learning.



Institutional support

Support school leaders in developing coherent institutional responses to safeguard staff.



Shared language and frameworks

Provide community and NGO partners with shared language and frameworks.



Practice aligned with commitments

Align everyday practice with national and European commitments on equality, safety, and democratic education.

1.3. Who this Tool Serves

This tool is primarily intended for educators, counsellors, and school leaders who are navigating polarisation, misinformation, disinformation, and anti-rights pressure in and around school life. It provides practical, classroom-ready routines and school-level guidance to support inclusive and democratic education, while strengthening safeguarding and professional confidence in situations where the need for SOGIESC inclusion is contested.

While the main audience is school-based professionals, the tool is also relevant for youth workers, civil society organisations, and community partners who collaborate with schools on inclusion, student well-being, and civic education. In addition, it can be used as a reference by ministries of education, equality bodies, inspectorates, teacher unions, and international organisations seeking to understand practice-level needs and to strengthen alignment between policy commitments and everyday school implementation.



1.4. How to Read this Tool

This tool is designed to be used flexibly and does not need to be read cover to cover. Readers can focus on the sections most relevant to their role, context, or immediate needs. The sections are designed to work together; the early chapters provide the conceptual foundation, and the later chapters translate that foundation into practical strategies for classrooms, schools, and partnerships.

Section 1: Introduction	This section introduces the tool, clarifies its purpose and audience, and sets out key context and baseline assumptions for using the guidance in diverse and sometimes restrictive or polarised environments.
Section 2: Pedagogical Foundations	This section explains why democratic, critical, and inclusive pedagogies matter in contexts shaped by anti-rights discourse. It summarises relevant European and international frameworks and evidence, and clarifies how the tool's practical strategies are grounded in these foundations.
Section 3: Classroom Strategies	This section provides time-efficient routines and micro-activities that educators can use across subjects and age groups to support critical questioning, dialogue, and inclusive classroom practice.
Section 4: School Playbook: Responding to Tensions and Opposition	This section supports schools when the need for SOGIESC inclusion is being contested. It includes practical guidance on de-escalation, documentation and reporting, referral pathways, and measures to protect educators, emphasising shared responsibility rather than individualised responses.
Section 5: Alliances Beyond the Classroom	This section offers guidance on strengthening relationships and collaboration with parents and caregivers, NGOs, youth organisations, and local authorities, and on sustaining longer-term resilience at the community level.
Section 6: Case Vignettes	This section presents contrasting scenarios drawn from different European contexts to support reflection and application. It can be used for individual preparation, team discussion, or professional learning.
Section 7: Policy and Practice Alignment	This section shows how everyday school practice connects to wider policy and system frameworks, and how alignment itself can strengthen protection, coherence, and democratic practice. It also highlights synergy across the three education tools.

Where sections include practical tools (e.g. routines, guides, templates, or indicators), these can be adapted to context and used selectively depending on institutional capacity, mandate, and level of risk.

1.5. Context for this Tool: Situation in Europe

Across Europe, educators are increasingly required to navigate a complex landscape marked by rising political polarisation, coordinated anti-rights mobilisation, and rapidly evolving forms of digital misinformation and disinformation. These pressures shape what happens in classrooms, staffrooms, family interactions, and community relations. Schools are not only sites of learning—they are also contested public institutions where competing narratives about democracy, rights, and inclusion are negotiated daily.

At the same time, children and young people hold clear human rights: the right to education that is inclusive, non-discriminatory, and reflective of their lived realities; the right to curricula in which they see themselves represented; and the right to safe, supportive learning environments free from bullying, hostility, or erasure. These rights are not optional or conditional on political consensus; they are grounded in binding European and international human rights standards.

This tool operationalises European and international education and human rights commitments already set out in  **Tool 1: Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools**, translating them into everyday pedagogical, institutional, and relational practices for schools facing tension. The work is grounded in the understanding that anti-rights narratives do not emerge spontaneously: they travel through social media ecosystems, parent networks, local politics, and transnational campaigns that often target schools directly. In some contexts, these pressures are also reflected in legislative or policy measures that restrict or prohibit the discussion of SOGIESC-related content in education, narrowing the space for rights-based teaching, and increasing uncertainty for educators and schools. Educators frequently encounter these dynamics through classroom comments, parent complaints, community misinformation and disinformation, or direct pressure to self-censor.

In this context, teachers and school leaders require strategies that are pedagogically robust, evidence-based, and systemically supported, not ad hoc responses left to individual judgment. This tool, therefore, draws on three interconnected bodies of knowledge:

- **Policy and system-level frameworks** from the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Commission (EC), the United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Eurydice, and European equality bodies, which frame rights, responsibilities, digital citizenship, media literacy, inclusion, and democratic culture.
- **Academic and pedagogical research** from across Europe, including studies on critical pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, teacher autonomy, intercultural education, restorative practice, trauma-informed approaches, and inclusive school leadership.
- **Professional and practitioner knowledge**, including teacher unions, teacher-training institutions, human rights institutions, media-literacy indices, and documented whole-school approaches to safety and inclusion.

Together, these sources highlight a shared insight: effective responses to anti-rights discourse are not achieved through isolated lessons or reactive crisis management. They emerge from democratic pedagogy, critical literacy capacities, institutional protection for educators, and alliances that extend beyond the classroom.

1.6. Shared Baseline Knowledge

This tool assumes access to a shared baseline understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), including age-appropriate language, child-development considerations, and clarity about what is, and is not, being taught in schools.

Foundational definitions, framing guidance, and common misconceptions are provided in the overarching [Tool 0: Framework, Principles, and Guidance](#). This tool does not repeat that material. Instead, it focuses on how anti-rights narratives intersect with classroom practice, media literacy, safeguarding, and institutional response once inclusive education is already part of a school's professional mandate.

Note on Context, Use, and Scope

Educational contexts across Europe differ significantly in their political climate, institutional mandates, and levels of public support for inclusive practice. In some settings, schools and education actors may be positioned to implement the approaches outlined in this tool directly; in others, the material may function primarily as a resource for preparation, professional reflection, advocacy, or longer-term capacity building.

This tool is therefore not designed as a universal implementation manual. It offers evidence-informed practices, institutional pathways, and relational strategies that can be drawn on selectively and proportionately, depending on context. Deeper structural adaptation, legislative reform, or system-level change sits beyond the scope of this publication and depends on the mandate and willingness of public authorities.



2. Pedagogical Foundations



This section draws on critical pedagogy, intersectional inclusion, and human-rights-based education research to explain why particular strategies build resilience against anti-rights discourse, and how they can be translated into everyday school practice. It also clarifies how these foundations underpin the later sections of the tool on classroom strategies, responses to tensions and opposition, alliances, and policy alignment.

Within this tool, SOGIESC-related inclusion is not treated as a separate or specialised agenda. Instead, it is understood as one strand of schools' existing responsibilities for safeguarding, anti-bullying, equality, and democratic culture. Framing inclusion in this way reduces the risk of fragmentation, supports coherence across school policies, and avoids placing additional or exceptional burdens on educators.

Throughout this tool, the term anti-rights is used to describe movements and narratives that seek to undermine equality, inclusion, and democratic education, including – but not limited to – anti-gender framings.

This section supports different professional roles by clarifying how pedagogical principles connect to safeguarding, leadership responsibility, and classroom practice (see **Table 1**).

TABLE 1. AUDIENCE GUIDE: PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Audience	Elements addressed
Educators	Pedagogical grounding for classroom routines, dialogue, and critical literacy practices.
School leaders	Leadership accountability, safety, and system coherence.

What this looks like in practice

In practice, the pedagogical foundations in this section support educators and school leaders in responding to anti-rights discourse through inclusive, democratic, and critical teaching approaches, rather than through confrontation or isolated crisis responses. They help schools create learning environments where students can question information, recognise stereotypes, discuss disagreement respectfully, and understand the impact of exclusion, misinformation and disinformation, while ensuring that SOGIESC inclusion is treated as part of existing responsibilities for safeguarding, equality, anti-bullying, media literacy, and democratic culture.

2.1. Core Pedagogical Pillars



Education as a practice of freedom

Critical pedagogy positions education as dialogical and transformative, centred on learners' capacity to question, reason, and act ethically within their communities.¹ In the context of anti-rights discourse, this means creating classroom cultures where students learn to interrogate claims, look past surface assumptions, and weigh evidence without stigmatising peers. The goal is not ideological conformity but critical agency: the ability to evaluate information, hold disagreement with respect, and participate in democratic life. Restorative dialogue and conflict-mediation approaches are important here, giving students structured ways to stay in conversation when discussions become tense or polarised.



Teacher autonomy and agency

Evidence from Finland and broader European teacher-education research highlights that teacher autonomy, professional judgement, and reflective practice are key to embedding inclusive pedagogy and media-literacy routines sustainably.² Rather than one-off lessons, teachers need time-efficient, adaptable routines that can be used across subjects and age groups, supported by mentoring and peer reflection. This aligns with the tool's emphasis on short, adaptable classroom and staffroom activities, rather than rigid lesson plans.

¹ Biesta, G. (2021). *World-centred education: A view for the present*. London: Routledge.

² Chung, J. (2023). 'Research-informed teacher education, teacher autonomy and teacher agency: the example of Finland'. *London Review of Education*, 21(1), 13.

Kasa, T., Rautiainen, M., Malama, M., and Kallioniemi, A. (2021). 'Human rights and democracy are not self-evident': Finnish student teachers' perceptions on democracy and human rights education. *Human Rights Education Review*, 4(2), pp. 69–84.



Intersectional inclusion

Intersectional inclusion recognises that learners may experience privilege in relation to some aspects of their identity or social position while simultaneously experiencing discrimination or marginalisation in relation to others. These dynamics may be shaped by race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, and the ways in which these factors interact within a particular context. An intersectional lens helps schools identify these more complex and overlapping experiences without assuming that all learners within a particular group are affected in the same way.

A human-rights-based approach asks schools to make diversity visible in language, examples, and materials, to protect dignity and participation, and to ensure that safeguarding practices are transparent and consistent.³ In the context of countering anti-rights discourse, this requires explicit and accurate terminology, as well as case examples that normalise diversity and challenge stereotypes without pathologising learners. It also requires careful attention to whose experiences and perspectives are centred, overlooked, or silenced in classroom dialogue.



Media and information literacy

Both the Council of Europe's Digital Citizenship Education framework and the European Commission's teacher guidelines emphasise repeated practice in claim analysis, source checking, bias awareness, and respectful online and offline engagement.⁴ The emphasis is on spiralled, time-efficient routines: brief activities embedded weekly across subjects, rather than isolated "media literacy days." This habituates learners to test evidence, recognise manipulation, and debate constructively, and provides the backbone for this tool's "Name the claim > Trace the source > Test the evidence" routines.

³ UNESCO (2022). Safe, Seen and Included: Report on school-based sexuality education inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education. Paris: UNESCO.

⁴ Council of Europe (2019). Digital Citizenship Education Handbook. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. European Commission (2022). Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.



Governance perspective

Schools also model democratic culture through participation, accountability, and transparent decision-making. Aligning classroom practice with leadership roles, documentation, and quality-assurance processes helps ensure that inclusion and educator protection are institutional responsibilities rather than individual burdens.⁵ This anchoring supports consistency during moments when tension or opposition arise and underpins this tool's school-level guidance (see Section 4. School Playbook) and leadership checklists.

2.2. European and International Frameworks

This tool draws on established European frameworks on democratic culture, digital citizenship, inclusion, and school safety (Council of Europe, European Commission, OECD, UNESCO). Rather than restating these frameworks, this tool focuses on how schools translate them into daily practice when anti-rights pressure arises.

2.2.1. Council of Europe – Digital Citizenship Education (DCE)

The Council of Europe's Digital Citizenship Education Handbook⁶ provides a foundational framework for understanding schools as spaces for cultivating democratic values in digital environments. It moves beyond risk-focused internet education to emphasise rights, participation, and critical engagement.

The Competences for Democratic Culture model, comprising values, attitudes, skills, and critical understanding, offers an adaptable pedagogical reference for developing students' resilience to misinformation, disinformation, and anti-rights narratives.

⁵ European Commission (2023). Promoting diversity and inclusion in schools in Europe. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

OECD (2025). Results from TALIS 2024: The State of Teaching. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Education International (2024). Report on the 2024 Education International Quadrennial Gender Survey. Brussels: Education International.

⁶ Council of Europe (2019). Digital Citizenship Education Handbook. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Implications for this tool

This tool can align its media-literacy routines ("Name the claim > Trace the source > Test the evidence") with DCE's three learning domains: Being Online, Well-being Online, and Rights Online, so that classroom activities reinforce broader democratic-culture goals.

2.2.2 Council of Europe – Safe at School

The Council of Europe report *Safe at School: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe*⁷ provides a Europe-specific overview of how education systems can prevent and address SOGIESC-based violence. It frames such violence as an education-sector responsibility and highlights the importance of comprehensive responses that combine policy, inclusive curricula, staff training, student support, partnerships with civil society, and monitoring.

For this tool, the *Safe at School* report is particularly relevant because it connects SOGIESC-based safety and inclusion with ordinary education governance and school practice. It reinforces the need for schools to move beyond isolated awareness-raising activities and to develop coordinated, whole-school responses that protect learners, support educators, and make responsibilities clear across the education community.

Implications for this tool

*The guidance in this tool builds on the *Safe at School* report by translating education-sector responsibilities into practical school-level routines, leadership safeguards, referral pathways, and alliance-building strategies. It informs the tool's emphasis on treating responses to anti-rights discourse, misinformation, disinformation, and opposition as part of broader duties to prevent violence, uphold non-discrimination, and maintain safe learning environments.*

⁷ Council of Europe, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit (2018). *Safe at school: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

2.2.3. European Commission – Digital Literacy and Tackling Disinformation

The European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027)⁸ and Guidelines for Teachers and Educators on Tackling Disinformation and Promoting Digital Literacy⁹ situate critical digital literacy at the centre of EU education reform. The guidelines include practical classroom activities, such as bias diaries, source triangulation, lateral reading, and collaborative fact-checking, which have been piloted across multiple member States.

Implications for this tool

These activities can be adapted into quick, time-efficient classroom routines or “critical literacy cards” and integrated into existing subject curricula. This will inform Section 3. Classroom Strategies through concrete examples and teacher-friendly prompts.

2.2.4. Eurydice – Diversity, Inclusion, and Bullying Prevention

Eurydice's¹⁰ comparative review shows that most European education systems now embed diversity and inclusion as criteria within national quality-assurance and inspection frameworks. However, there remains significant variation in implementation depth and educator training.

Eurydice's findings on bullying and violence prevention emphasise the importance of whole-school approaches that combine clear leadership roles, staff training, student participation, and community engagement.

Implications for this tool

The tool includes a two-page school self-review grid enabling school leaders to map inclusion, safety, and information-literacy efforts within their improvement cycles. This creates a practical link between everyday practice and formal quality-assurance processes.

⁸ European Commission (2021). Digital education action plan (2021–2027). Brussels: European Commission.

⁹ European Commission (2022). Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁰ European Commission (2023). Promoting diversity and inclusion in schools in Europe. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

2.2.5. UNESCO – Safe to Learn and Thrive (2024)

UNESCO's Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education¹¹ connects inclusive education with safety and well-being for both students and educators. The report emphasises accountability and leadership in building institutional cultures of care, and highlights the importance of clear reporting, documentation, and follow-up mechanisms.

Implications for this tool

The guidance frames educator and learner safety as a systemic obligation, rather than an individual responsibility, and sets out adaptable mechanisms for reporting, documentation, and referral that schools can integrate into their existing safeguarding and support procedures.

2.2.6. OECD – TALIS 2024

The OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2024)¹² highlights key conditions for effective teacher development: peer mentoring, manageable workload, and institutional support for professional autonomy. It also shows that teachers who engage in collaborative professional learning report higher confidence and job satisfaction.

Implications for this tool

Professional development components are framed as short, peer-supported micro-Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities (20–30 minutes) with embedded reflective prompts for mentoring pairs or staff teams, rather than large, stand-alone training sessions.

11 UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education. Paris: UNESCO.

12 OECD (2025). Results from TALIS 2024: The State of Teaching. Paris: OECD Publishing.

2.3. Academic and Practitioner Evidence (European Research)

European research converges on a consistent finding: educators are more able to address contested or polarised issues when inclusive practice is embedded across the school, supported by leadership, and reinforced through reflection rather than isolated interventions. Regardless of national context, this implication for practice can be applied in any education system.

Across multiple European education systems, research highlights that:

- **Teacher agency matters:** Educators are more confident addressing controversial or polarising topics when they are trained to use critical inquiry, reflective practice, and rights-based reasoning as part of everyday teaching, not as exceptional responses to crisis.
- **Leadership shapes safety:** Inclusive school cultures depend on clear leadership responsibility for safeguarding, communication, and follow-up when incidents occur. Where these responsibilities are diffused or informal, teachers are more likely to self-censor or avoid engagement.
- **Reflection strengthens practice:** Intercultural and inclusive education research consistently shows that structured reflection—individually and collectively—supports educators to manage complexity, power dynamics, and disagreement, without personalising conflict.
- **Whole-school approaches are more sustainable:** Prevention models that combine classroom routines, staff coordination, and leadership oversight are more effective than ad hoc responses or reliance on individual goodwill.

2.3.1 What this means in practice

Rather than replicating national models, this tool translates shared lessons into adaptable exercises:

- **Spiralled routines** that embed critical questioning and inclusion across subjects, not relying solely on one-off lessons or symbolic activities.
- **Leadership checklists** that clarify institutional responsibilities for safeguarding, communication, documentation, and peer support.
- **Micro-reflection tools** (e.g. short journalling prompts, mentoring conversations, staff triads) that support educators to process challenging moments and build confidence over time.
- **A simple incident cycle:** anticipate > act > review, embedded in the School Playbook to support consistent, proportionate responses when tensions arise.



2.4. Teacher Unions and Professional Voices

Across Europe, teacher unions consistently identify education as a key site of anti-rights mobilisation.¹³ Union evidence highlights growing pressure on educators to self-censor, uncertainty about institutional backing, and increased exposure to complaints, harassment, or reputational risk when addressing gender, equality, or diversity. Importantly, union perspectives frame this not as a lack of commitment by educators, but as a structural problem of protection and accountability.

2.4.1. What this means in practice

This tool treats union perspectives as indicators of practice pressure, not policy argument. As a result, it:

- Explicitly recognises educators as rights-holders, not merely policy implementers;
- Normalises escalation and referral as professional practice, not failure;
- Includes a “Know Your Allies” orientation that signposts union guidance, staff support mechanisms, and well-being resources;
- Reinforces the principle that educators should never manage resistance, counterreaction, or controversy alone.

¹³ European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) (2024). Education International. Marcus, R. (2024). Education: A key battleground for anti-gender activists. Brussels: Education International.

2.5. Media and Information Literacy Capacity Across Europe

European data show wide variation in media and information literacy capacity between education systems. While some countries benefit from long-term investment in teacher training and curriculum integration, others face limited infrastructure, fragmented policy frameworks, or politically constrained environments. This unevenness means that uniform expectations for schools are unrealistic and can inadvertently increase risk.

2.5.1. What this means in practice

To respond to this variation, this toolkit adopts a tiered, context-sensitive approach.

- Schools are encouraged to begin at a level that matches their existing capacity, rather than aiming immediately for transformative change.
- Strategies are structured across protective, sensitive, and developmental entry points, allowing leaders to sequence action responsibly.
- A short readiness self-assessment helps schools identify appropriate starting points, reducing overload and preventing symbolic or unsafe implementation.

This approach supports ambition without assuming uniform conditions and protects educators in lower-capacity settings or contexts where SOGIESC inclusion practices are more likely to encounter opposition.

2.6. Gaps, Risks, and Transferability

This section identifies common practice-level risks that schools may encounter when addressing anti-rights narratives. Rather than analysing systems, it focuses on what educators and leaders need to watch for in everyday implementation: where support is most needed, where tensions tend to arise, and where adaptation is essential. **Table 2** translates European research into practical actionables to support proportionate, context-sensitive use of this toolkit.

**TABLE 2. GAPS, RISKS, AND TRANSFERABILITY:
WHAT SCHOOLS NEED TO WATCH OUT FOR IN PRACTICE**

Area of practice	What European evidence signals	What this means for schools using this tool
Policy–practice gap	Strong policy frameworks often do not translate easily into everyday classroom or staffroom practice. ¹⁴	Provide time-efficient and repeatable routines and clear leadership guidance that can be embedded in existing practice, rather than considered as additional initiatives.
Anti-rights specificity	Anti-rights narratives related to SOGIESC remain under-addressed in many mainstream inclusion policies. ¹⁵	Use explicit but proportionate examples and accurate language to avoid ambiguity, while ensuring safeguarding and leadership backing are in place.
Educator protection	Teachers report increasing harassment, workload pressure, and self-censorship when addressing contested issues. ¹⁶	Treat documentation, escalation, and staff support as core elements of practice, not optional add-ons. Educators should not be left to manage tensions or opposition without institutional support.
Context variation	Media literacy capacity and democratic culture vary widely across Europe. ¹⁷	Apply a tiered entry-point approach (Protective–Sensitive–Transformative), allowing schools to begin where capacity and safety permit.
Evidence depth	Many promising practices lack robust or long-term evaluation. ¹⁸	Present examples as promising or illustrative practices, with short evidence notes. Conduct periodical implementation review to assess impact.

¹⁴ European Commission (2023). *Promoting diversity and inclusion in schools in Europe*. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁵ UNESCO (2024). *Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education*. Paris: UNESCO.

¹⁶ Education International (2024). *Report on the 2024 Education International Quadrennial Gender Survey*. Brussels: Education International.

¹⁷ Open Society Institute (2023). *The Media Literacy Index 2023 Policy brief: Measuring Vulnerability of Societies to Disinformation*. Policy brief. New York: OSI.

¹⁸ Van Mieghem, A., et al. (2018). An analysis of research on inclusive education: a systematic search and meta review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(6), pp. 675–689.

These gaps and risks are not reason to delay action. They inform how the tool is used, how examples are framed, and why adaptation and professional judgement are essential. Transferability lies in principles and routines, rather than copying practices without regard to context.

2.7. From Principles to Practice

To support narrative coherence, **Table 3** bridges the pedagogical pillars and evidence base to the practical tools that follow. It summarises how each pillar translates into concrete classroom, leadership, and monitoring practices.

TABLE 3. FROM PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS TO EVERYDAY SCHOOL PRACTICE

PEDAGOGICAL PILLAR	PRACTICE IMPLICATION	EXAMPLE ROUTINE/TOOL
Democratic or critical pedagogy	Structured inquiry; reasoned disagreement; protection of dignity.	Ground rules and “listening turn”; restorative dialogue steps; exit slips (claim + evidence).
Teacher autonomy and agency	Adaptable routines; peer reflection and mentoring.	10–30-minute activity cards; mentor-pair prompts; peer-observation notes.
Intersectional inclusion	Accurate SOGIESC language; visible diversity; anti-stigma focus.	Inclusive language checklist; stereotype debrief activities; vignette discussions.
Media and information literacy	Spiralled claim–source–evidence routines; bias awareness.	Routine card plus lateral-reading triad; bias diary; “fact-check circle.”
Governance microcosm	Shared responsibility; documentation and review cycles.	Leadership checklist; incident log; regular plan–do–review–adjust template.

2.8. Design Implications for this Tool

Drawing together the frameworks and evidence above, this tool is structured around:

- **A pedagogical spine grounded in media and information literacy**, integrating critical-literacy routines within subject teaching and aligning with the Council of Europe's Digital Citizenship Education model.
- **Leadership and quality-assurance alignment**, via a two-page checklist outlining safeguarding, staff support, escalation responsibilities, and links to existing school-improvement processes.
- **A whole-school incident cycle**—anticipate > act > review—with a staff debrief template to support learning from incidents and reduce isolation for individual teachers.
- **Micro-Continuous Professional Development (micro-CPD) and mentoring**, through 15–30-minute staffroom sessions emphasising de-escalation, care, and reflection, drawing on evidence from TALIS and Nordic whole-school programmes.
- **Context-spectrum navigation**, applying UNESCO's Protective–Sensitive–Transformative ladder to all strategies, so schools can locate themselves and scale up gradually.
- **Union and ally support**, incorporating ETUCE and Education International materials into guidance on collective action and teacher protection, and foregrounding mutual learning with parents and community actors rather than one-way persuasion.

These design implications provide the bridge into the subsequent sections of the tool, particularly the Classroom Strategies, School Playbook, Alliances, and Case Vignettes components.

2.9. Conclusion

European evidence confirms that effectively countering anti-rights discourse requires the convergence of three interdependent conditions: whole-school democratic culture, robust protection and support for educators, and systematic development of students' critical literacies. Across policy frameworks, academic research, and practitioner insight, the message is consistent: schools need practical tools that are both pedagogically grounded and operationally feasible.

The evidence base points to three core requirements for sustainable impact:

- 1. Democratic pedagogy and critical literacies are embedded across the curriculum**, ensuring students routinely practise questioning claims, evaluating evidence, recognising bias, and engaging in respectful disagreement.
- 2. Inclusive leadership and quality-assurance alignment**, protecting staff and learners through clear safeguarding roles, transparent decision-making, supportive incident-response structures, and mechanisms that defend teacher autonomy and professional judgement.
- 3. Context-sensitive pathways supported through micro-CPD and mentoring**, allowing schools to scale their efforts appropriately, particularly in settings where media-literacy capacity, democratic culture, or resourcing may be limited.

Taken together, these findings indicate that this tool should prioritise:



Time-efficient, high-impact classroom routines

Grounded in media and information literacy.



Leadership checklists and quality-assurance prompts

Embed inclusion into whole-school processes.



School Playbook

Institutional safeguards, documentation templates and escalation pathways.



Tiered strategies

Choose entry points that fit the context. Aligned with Digital Citizenship Education and UNESCO's Protective–Sensitive–Transformative framework.

These conclusions set the foundation for the next stages of the tool: the development of classroom strategies, school-level responses to tensions and opposition, alliances with communities, and case vignettes that illustrate how these principles translate into real-world practice.



Democratic pedagogy and critical literacies

Across the curriculum: question claims, evaluate evidence, recognise bias, disagree respectfully.

Sustainable impact



Context-sensitive pathways

Micro-CPD and mentoring. Adapt to local capacity and resources.



Inclusive leadership and quality assurance

Safeguarding, clear roles and transparent decisions. Protect staff and learners.



3. Classroom Strategies



Purpose

This section supports educators, school leaders and student-facing practitioners to respond to anti-rights narratives, misinformation, disinformation, and polarised discussions through research-informed, time-efficient classroom practices. Rather than offering standalone activities, it focuses on embedded routines; small, repeatable practices that cultivate democratic habits, critical literacies, and respectful dialogues over time.

When this is relevant

These strategies are particularly useful when:

- contested or polarising topics arise unexpectedly in class;
- students repeat online misinformation, disinformation or stereotypes;
- discussions become emotionally charged or personalised;
- educators want to respond without escalating conflict or absorbing risk alone.

Consistent with research in democratic and critical pedagogy,¹⁹ these approaches foreground inquiry, dignity, and intellectual openness. They help create classroom conditions where disagreement can be explored safely, and evidence-seeking becomes habitual.

¹⁹ Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
Biesta, G. (2021). *World-centred education: A view for the present*. London: Routledge.

Who this section is for (and when)

TABLE 4. AUDIENCE GUIDE: CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

AUDIENCE	TYPICAL USE MOMENTS	EXAMPLE ROUTINE/TOOL
Educators: Sections 3.1–3.5	Core classroom routines, dialogue methods, restorative micro-moves, and short activities for everyday teaching.	Ground rules and “listening turn”; restorative dialogue steps; exit slips (claim + evidence).
School leaders: Section 3.6 and the bridge to Section 4	Staffroom learning, professional confidence-building, and alignment with institutional protection.	10–30-minute activity cards; mentor-pair prompts; peer-observation notes.
Youth workers or NGOs: Sections 3.2–3.4	Dialogical and media-literacy routines suitable for workshops and non-formal educational settings.	Inclusive language checklist; stereotype debrief activities; vignette discussions.
Media and information literacy	Spiralled claim–source–evidence routines; bias awareness.	Routine card plus lateral-reading triad; bias diary; “fact-check circle.”
Governance microcosm	Shared responsibility; documentation and review cycles.	Leadership checklist; incident log; regular plan–do–review–adjust template.

What this looks like in practice

The strategies that follow move from the most structured to the most flexible: a core media-literacy routine that can anchor any lesson, dialogue methods for sustaining constructive disagreement, restorative micro-moves for moments of tension, a bank of short activities for embedding critical literacy across subjects, and prompt cards for educators navigating pressure in real time. They are designed to be used selectively and combined over time, rather than delivered as a sequence.



3.1. The Critical Questioning Routine (CQR)

Name the claim > Trace the source > Test the evidence

The CQR is the tool's media-literacy spine. It operationalises the core competences of the Council of Europe's Digital Citizenship Education model and the European Commission's guidelines on tackling disinformation, while remaining simple enough for weekly use in any subject.

STEP 1: NAME THE CLAIM

Students write down or verbalise:

- What is being said?
- What assumption underlies this statement?

Why this matters: Research on cognitive load and misinformation²⁰ shows that slowing down the initial interpretive step reduces emotional reactivity and strengthens accuracy.

STEP 2 : TRACE THE SOURCE

Students examine:

- Who said this?
- Where does it appear? Is this a person? Institution? Social media post? Screenshot? Rumour?
- What purpose might the source have?

Why this matters: Evidence from media-literacy interventions across Europe shows that identifying authorship and motivation increases learners' ability to resist manipulated content.²¹

²⁰ European Commission (2022). Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

²¹ Open Society Institute (2023). The Media Literacy Index 2023 Policy brief: Measuring Vulnerability of Societies to Disinformation. Policy brief. New York: OSI.

STEP 3: TEST THE EVIDENCE

Students ask:

- What proof is offered?
- Is it reliable, corroborated, and current?
- Which perspectives are absent?

Why this matters: This step builds democratic habits of evidence-seeking, central to critical digital citizenship.

Classroom Format (10–12 minutes)

1. Present a short statement, social media post, or rumour.
2. CQR in pairs: Students complete the three steps individually or in pairs.
3. Whole-class 3-minute debrief: What did we notice? What still feels unclear?
4. Teacher notes misconceptions to address in later lessons.

TABLE 5. CRITICAL QUESTIONING ROUTINE (CQR)

STEP	ICON	GUIDING QUESTIONS	TEACHER PROMPT
1. Name the claim		What is being said? What assumption(s) does it make?	"Let's slow down. What exactly is the claim?"
2. Trace the source		Who said this? Where does it come from? Why might it have been shared?	"Let's check what we know about the source."
3. Test the evidence		What evidence supports this? Is it reliable? Is anything missing?	"What proof is provided, and what is missing?"

3.2. Dialogical Learning Routines

These routines sustain constructive disagreement and inclusive participation drawing on critical pedagogy, intercultural dialogue models, and Nordic dialogical education traditions. These are not debate tools. Their purpose is to cultivate listening, slow thinking, and curiosity—conditions necessary for safety.

ROUTINE A: THE TWO-MINUTE TURN

Students speak for up to two minutes without interruption. Listeners summarise what they understand, not what they disagree with.

Why: Reduces reactivity; validates dignity; prevents “fast-talk dominance”.

ROUTINE B: THE CLARIFY–REFLECT–RESPOND CYCLE

1. Clarify: “I heard you say ... Is that accurate?”
2. Reflect: “What I appreciate or find interesting is ...”
3. Respond: “One perspective I have is ...”

Why: Supported by intercultural education research showing structured cycles reduce conflict and misinterpretation.

ROUTINE C: THE FOUR CORNERS

Students physically position themselves along an agree/disagree spectrum and articulate reasons. Corners labelled: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. Students move physically, then each corner develops a short rationale.

Why: Makes plural perspectives visible without placing students on the spot individually.

TABLE 6. DIALOGICAL LEARNING ROUTINES

ROUTINE	ICON	HOW IT WORKS	WHY IT HELPS
Two-Minute Turn		Each student speaks for two minutes without interruption.	Builds active listening; reduces reactivity.
Clarify–Reflect–Respond		Students clarify what they heard > reflect > respond.	Supports dignity; avoids miscommunication.
Four Corners		Students move to agree/disagree corners and justify their stance.	Visualises multiple perspectives safely.



3.3. Restorative Dialogue for Polarised Moments

When discussions become tense or personalised, educators need micro-moves that preserve learning without absorbing emotional labour alone. Restorative dialogue supports critical pedagogy by stabilising the learning environment while keeping responsibility shared.

Three Restorative Questions

1. What's happening in this moment?
2. What do we need to continue this safely?
3. How can we move forward while respecting everyone here?

Why: These questions align with democratic and relational pedagogy and support emotional regulation without derailing the lesson.

When to Pause vs. When to Refer

Pause the discussion

- Rising tension;
- Repeated misinformation and disinformation;
- Confusion or emotional strain.

Refer or escalate (to leadership)

- Distress;
- Community complaints;
- Identity-based targeting;
- Threats or harassment.

This mirrors findings from UNESCO²² and Education International²³ regarding educator protection frameworks.

22 UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education. Paris: UNESCO.

23 Education International (2024). Report on the 2024 Education International Quadrennial Gender Survey. Brussels: Education International.

Pre-taught Ground Rules

- Challenge ideas, not people;
- Take space/make space;
- Speak from personal experience;
- Evidence over volume.
- Ground rules must be taught before a crisis, not administered reactively.

TABLE 7. RESTORATIVE DIALOGUE: QUICK INTERVENTIONS

TRIGGER	ICON	TEACHER MOVE	OUTCOME
Rising tension		Pause and ask: “What do we need to continue safely?”	Restores emotional safety.
Personalisation of comments		“Challenge ideas, not people.”	Prevents harm, models respect.
Misinformation and disinformation repeated		“Let’s check the evidence together.”	Brings students back to inquiry mode.
Distress or safeguarding concern		Pause > follow safeguarding pathway > document.	Safety and accountability.

Safeguarding note

These restorative moves are first-line classroom responses. Where distress, identity-based targeting, or external complaints arise, responsibility shifts to leadership and safeguarding pathways (see Section 4).

3.4. Activities Bank: 10 Micro-Activities (5–15 minutes)

These are short, time-efficient interventions designed to habituate critical literacy, perspective-taking, and democratic reasoning across subjects. They are grounded in Digital Citizenship Education, European Commission guidance on disinformation, intercultural education, visual literacy research, and UNESCO rights-based education.

Each entry follows a consistent structure: a brief description of the activity, a worked example showing what it looks like in practice, and a note on what it supports pedagogically. The examples are set in generic European secondary classroom contexts. They assume an educator with some degree of professional confidence and institutional backing, and students who are able to engage with contested material. Where these conditions do not fully apply, the tiered entry-point approach set out in Section 2.5. offers guidance on how to sequence and adapt strategies proportionately. The examples are illustrative, not prescriptive: adaptation to age group, subject, cultural and linguistic context, and available time is expected and is itself a marker of professional judgment.

1. BIAS DIARY



Students track one media item per day for three days, noting framing, omissions, emotional tone, and choice of language.

In practice:

A secondary class in a civic education lesson is asked to track one media item per day for three days. On day two, a student brings in a headline from a national newspaper: “Parents protest school’s new ‘gender lessons’”

The group notices the headline uses scare quotes around “gender lessons”, but the article never explains what the lessons actually contain. They log: framing choice (alarm), omission (no description of the actual curriculum), and emotional tone (threat to parents).

The educator asks: “Who is imagined as the reader of this headline, and whose concern is being activated?” Students begin to notice that the headline assumes a parent audience worried about their child, while the children who would actually attend the lessons are absent from the frame entirely.

The follow-up question: “What would this headline look like if it were written for a different audience, one that included the students themselves?”

Supports: Awareness of influence techniques; emotional distancing from content; recognition of whose perspective is centred and whose is absent.

2. CLAIM–COUNTERCLAIM MAP



In pairs, students identify two opposing claims on an issue and map shared underlying concerns (e.g. safety, fairness, belonging).

In practice:

A student in a social studies class repeats something heard online: “Schools are trying to confuse children about whether they’re boys or girls.” Rather than debating the claim, the educator uses a paired mapping activity. One student takes the claim as stated; the other is asked to articulate a counter-position.

Both pairs then identify the underlying concern in each position. The class discusses: safety, belonging, parental trust, and children’s well-being.

The educator then adds a second layer: “Who gets to define what safety means here? For whom is confusion the risk, and for whom is invisibility the risk?” Students begin to notice that the original claim centres one child’s hypothetical discomfort while leaving another child’s actual experience unnamed.

The debrief question shifts: “What happens when shared values are not equally available to everyone in this room?”

Supports: Values-based reasoning; recognition of asymmetry between positions; empathy without forced agreement.

3. VOCABULARY ACCURACY CHECK



Students compare everyday or online terms with child-appropriate definitions grounded in UNESCO terminology.

In practice:

Before a lesson on rights and identity, the educator puts three terms on the board: “gender,” “sex,” and “gender identity.” Students work in pairs to write what they think each term means, drawing on whatever they already know, including what they have learned from social media, family conversations, or previous lessons.

Pairs then compare their definitions with those from a UNESCO or Council of Europe reference glossary provided by the educator. The class discusses where their definitions were accurate, where they were incomplete, and where they had absorbed informal or inaccurate usage.

The educator then asks: “Where did your definitions come from? Who produced the language you were using, and whose interests does that language serve?” Students reflect on the difference between terminology that protects dignity and terminology that has been shaped by campaigns designed to generate fear.

The closing question: “Why does precision in language matter more for some people than for others?”

Supports: Normalisation; linguistic accuracy; dignity-affirming language; critical awareness of how terminology is produced and by whom.

4. "WHAT'S MISSING?" EXERCISE



Students analyse a short text, post, or clip and identify missing voices, data, or perspectives.

In practice:

The educator shares a short clip from a fictional school board meeting, or a news segment with names removed, in which a parent argues that LGBTQI inclusive content "has no place in schools." Students are asked not to agree or disagree with the claim, but to identify: whose voice is present, whose is absent, what evidence is cited, and what evidence is missing.

Students notice: no young people speak, no educators are quoted, no research is referenced. The educator then asks a further question: "When we say a voice is missing, we should also ask why it is missing. Is it because no one thought to include it, or because including it carries a cost?"

The class discusses why LGBTQI young people are rarely present in public debates that directly concern their safety and education, and what it means that decisions about their visibility are made without them.

The debrief question: "Who is assumed to be the audience for this conversation, and who is assumed to be its subject?"

Supports: Perspective-taking; democratic inclusion; critical inquiry; recognition of the difference between absence and erasure.

5. LENS SWAP



Students briefly rewrite a scenario from another stakeholder's viewpoint (e.g. peer, teacher, family member).

In practice:

After a class discussion on a contested topic, for example, a news story about a trans student's right to use facilities in accordance with their gender identity, the educator asks students to rewrite a short paragraph about the situation from three different perspectives: the student concerned, a parent who expressed concern, and the school principal. Students are not asked to agree with any position, only to articulate it with care.

When pairs share their paragraphs, the educator introduces a structural question before the reflection: "Notice whose perspective required you to imagine a life you haven't lived, and whose required you to imagine an institution you navigate every day. That difference is not neutral."

The class reflects on which perspective was hardest to write fairly and what that difficulty reveals not only about empathy but also about whose experiences are already treated as normal in how schools, media, and public debate are organised.

Supports: Intercultural sensitivity; relational understanding; critical awareness of whose experience is treated as the default.

6. SOURCE TRIANGULATION



Students check one claim across three different sources (e.g. news outlet, official website, NGO).

In practice:

A student tells the class they read that “a European country banned gender studies in schools.” The educator turns this into a live source triangulation exercise. Students are asked to find: a news outlet reporting the claim, an official government or parliamentary source, and a response by a civil society organisation working in education in that country.

In small groups, they compare what each source says, what each omits, and what the discrepancies reveal. The educator then asks: “Which of these sources had the resources to publish quickly, and which had to work harder to be heard?”

Students begin to notice that official and mainstream sources often reach wider audiences faster, while civil society organisations working closest to affected communities are frequently slower to appear in search results and less likely to be shared.

The closing question: “What does it mean for how we understand an issue if the sources easiest to find are not the sources closest to those most affected?”

Supports: Lateral reading; evidence evaluation; resistance to single-source claims; awareness of whose knowledge circulates most easily and why.

7. IMAGE/MEME DECONSTRUCTION



Students analyse an image or meme by asking: “What is the purpose? What emotions are triggered? What message travels fastest?”

In practice:

The educator shows the class a meme, fabricated for the exercise or sourced from a media literacy archive, showing a distressed child alongside text claiming schools are “indoctrinating” children. Students are asked, “What emotions does this image trigger? What message is designed to travel fastest? Who is the implied audience?”

The group maps the emotional logic: fear for children is the lever, the school is constructed as the threat, the parent is the intended mobiliser. The educator then asks: “Who is absent from this image, and what would change if they were visible?”

Students consider that the children most directly affected by anti-rights narratives, those whose identities or families are being debated, appear in this content only as a risk to be managed, never as people with their own perspectives and stakes.

The debrief question: “What work does this image do, and for whom does it do it?”

Supports: Visual literacy; recognition of manipulative techniques; critical awareness of who is centred and who is instrumentalised in hostile content.

8. QUICK RIGHTS CHECK-IN



A short pause where students link a classroom question to a rights principle (e.g. dignity, participation, privacy).

In practice:

Midway through a lesson on online communication, the educator pauses and asks: "Which rights are at stake in this situation?" Students are given a short list of rights principles: dignity, privacy, participation, non-discrimination, access to information. In the context of a scenario where a student's personal information was shared without their consent in a school WhatsApp group, students identify privacy and dignity as directly affected.

The educator then asks: "Are these rights equally real for everyone in this room? Think about whether some students need to rely on these protections more than others, and why." The discussion moves from abstract rights principles to lived unevenness: a student who is already out faces different stakes in a privacy breach than one who is not; a student from a minoritised background may have learned not to expect institutional protection as a given.

The check-in closes with: "Rights on paper and rights in practice are not always the same thing. What would it take to close that gap in this school?"

Supports: Rights-based reasoning; grounding discussion in shared norms; critical awareness of how rights function unevenly depending on who you are.

9. ALGORITHM CHECK



Students compare two anonymised examples, one emotionally charged and one neutral but factual, and examine what platforms incentivise and why.

In practice:

The educator presents two posts about the same event: one is a measured factual account of a school's new inclusion policy; the other is an outraged reaction video claiming the policy "destroys childhood". Both are anonymised. Students are asked which is more likely to be shared widely, and why.

The class maps the emotional rewards: the reaction video triggers indignation, which platforms amplify because it generates engagement. The educator then asks a second question: "Who benefits from keeping this debate loud and emotionally charged?". Platforms profit from engagement regardless of whether the content causes harm. Political actors can build constituencies from fear.

Students are then asked to consider that which is less visible: the students, families, and educators who are the subject of that content and who live with the consequences while the debate moves on. The question follows: "What does it mean that the people most affected by this conversation are rarely the ones shaping it?"

The exercise closes by asking whether students have noticed this pattern in their own feeds, and what it might take to change it, not only as consumers of media but as people who produce and share content.

Supports: Understanding of algorithmic amplification; structural awareness of online environments; recognition of who bears the cost of viral content about contested issues.

10. SCREENSHOT WITHOUT A SOURCE



Students examine a screenshot or quote with no visible source, date, or context and interrogate what they are being invited to assume.

In practice:

The educator shares a screenshot of a quote attributed to a school principal, stating that “all children will be taught that gender is a choice.” No date, no school name, no link. Students are asked: “What do we actually know from this image? What are we being invited to assume? How could this quote have been taken out of context, fabricated, or manipulated?”

The group reconstructs what a legitimate piece of communication from a school on this topic would actually contain: letterhead, context, curriculum reference, official channels. The educator then asks: “Why do you think this particular kind of claim, about schools and gender, travels so easily without a source? What fear does it activate, and whose fear is it?”

Students discuss the difference between viral content that manufactures anxiety, and communication that requires accountability. The closing question: “When something makes you feel certain without giving you evidence, what is it asking you to do, and who is asking you to do it?”

Supports: Lateral reading; evidence awareness; resistance to viral misinformation and disinformation; critical questioning of what emotional certainty is designed to produce.

TABLE 8. ACTIVITIES BANK OVERVIEW

ACTIVITY	ICON	TIME	FOCUS	LINKS TO FRAMEWORKS
Bias Diary		10–15 mins	Bias recognition	EC Guidelines
Claim–Counterclaim Map		10 mins	Values-based reasoning	CoE DCE
Vocabulary Accuracy Check		5–8 mins	Inclusive language	UNESCO ²⁴
What's Missing?		8–10 mins	Critical inquiry	EC/CoE
Lens Swap		10 mins	Empathy and perspective	Intercultural education
Source Triangulation		12–15 mins	Misinformation and disinformation	EC Guidelines
Image/Meme Deconstruction		5–12 mins	Visual literacy	CoE DCE
Quick Rights Check-In		5 mins	Rights awareness	UNESCO
Algorithm Check		8–12 mins	Algorithmic amplification	EC/OSI
Screenshot without a Source		5–10 mins	Decontextualised content	EC/CoE

²⁴ UNESCO (2022). Safe, Seen and Included: Report on school-based sexuality education inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Paris: UNESCO.

3.5. Media-literacy Practice Cards

Classroom strategies require time, design, and a degree of institutional support. This section offers something different: a compact set of prompt cards for educators navigating high-pressure moments in real time, when a claim surfaces unexpectedly, a discussion escalates, a student is visibly affected, or the educator themselves feels exposed or uncertain.

Each card is organised around a specific moment rather than a planned activity. It offers a micro-routine, a worked prompt, a note on what to watch for, and a single question to bring the room, or the educator, back to steady ground. The cards are designed to be used independently of the rest of this section, printed and kept to hand, and adapted to age group and context. They do not require preparation. They require only that the educator trusts their own professional judgment, which this tool exists to support.

A note on assumptions: these cards assume an educator who is acting in good faith and under pressure. They do not assume perfect conditions, a fully supportive institution, or a room without risk. Where risk is significant, the cards signal when to refer rather than manage alone.



CARD 1**An Unexpected Claim in Class**

For when a student repeats a hostile or inaccurate claim about LGBTQI people, gender, or inclusive education.

🕒 Micro-routine

Slow the moment down. Do not debate the claim directly or dismiss it. Bring the room back to inquiry.

🎯 Worked prompt

"That's something worth examining carefully. Let's ask: what is the claim, where does it come from, and what evidence would we need to evaluate it fairly?"

If the claim is identity-based or targets a person rather than an idea: "We're going to set that aside for now. Our ground rule is that we challenge ideas, not people. Let's come back to the evidence."

🔍 What to watch for

Notice whether any student in the room may be directly affected by the claim. A student who goes quiet, looks away, or becomes visibly tense may need a brief check-in after class. Do not ask them to respond or explain in the moment.

? The question to hold

"Who in this room is most affected by whether this claim goes unchallenged, and what do I owe them in this moment?"

CARD 2

A Polarised or Escalating Discussion



For when a classroom discussion becomes heated, personalised, or begins to feel unsafe.

Micro-routine

Pause. Reaffirm shared ground. Do not push through.

Worked prompt

“Let’s slow down. We’ve agreed that we challenge ideas, not people, and that everyone here has the right to feel safe. What do we need to continue this conversation respectfully?”

If the room does not settle: “We’re going to pause here and come back to this when we’re ready. That’s not avoidance, it’s how we take care of each other.”

What to watch for

Escalation often has a target, even when it appears general. Watch for a student whose identity or family is implicitly or explicitly at the centre of the tension. The question is not only how to de-escalate the room but who the room’s dynamics are landing on most heavily.

The question to hold

“Is this discussion still serving everyone in the room, or has it started to cost some students more than others?”

CARD 3

A Student Who Appears Affected or Targeted



For when a student shows signs of distress, or when a discussion is directly or indirectly targeting a student's identity, family, or experience.

🕒 Micro-routine

Stop the activity. Attend to the student without drawing further attention to them. Follow safeguarding pathways.

🎯 Worked prompt

To the class: "We're going to take a short break. I'd like everyone to write quietly for two minutes: what is one thing we need to do better in this conversation?"

To the student, quietly and after class: "I noticed that felt difficult. I want you to know I'm here, and I'll follow up with [pastoral lead or counsellor] to make sure you have support."

👁️ What to watch for

Do not ask the student to explain, represent, or educate the class. Their role in this moment is not to be a resource for others' learning. The educator holds that responsibility.

❓ The question to hold

"Am I protecting this student's dignity and safety, or am I managing the discomfort of the room at their expense?"

CARD 4

A Parent or Caregiver Challenge



For when a parent directly challenges the educator about inclusive content, curriculum, or classroom practice.

🕒 Micro-routine

Receive the concern without defending or debating. Refer to leadership. Do not manage this alone.

🎯 Worked prompt

“Thank you for raising this with me directly. Our school has clear processes for concerns about curriculum and well-being, and I want to make sure your concern is handled properly. I’ll refer this to [leadership or designated contact] who will follow up with you.”

If pressed for an immediate response: “I’m not in a position to speak to this fully right now, and I want to give your concern the attention it deserves. Leadership will be in touch.”

🔍 What to watch for

Parent challenges about LGBTQI inclusive content are often framed as concerns about children’s well-being or parental rights. Engaging with the framing directly, even to correct it, can draw the educator into a debate they are not resourced to manage alone and that is not theirs to manage. Referral is not avoidance. It is professional boundary-holding.

? The question to hold

“Am I the right person to handle this, or am I absorbing institutional responsibility that belongs elsewhere?”

CARD 5

A Staff Member Who Repeats Misinformation, Disinformation, or Anti-Rights Narratives



For when a colleague, not a student or parent, is the source of inaccurate or harmful framing.

🕒 Micro-routine

Do not correct publicly or in the moment if it will escalate. Document factually. Refer to leadership.

🗨️ Worked prompt

If in a staffroom or informal setting: “I’d push back gently on that. The evidence on this is clear, and I think it’s worth looking at together. Can we come back to it?”

If the comment occurred in front of students or caused harm: document what was said, the context, and the potential impact, and bring it to leadership using the factual documentation template in Section 4.

🔍 What to watch for

This situation is more common than toolkits tend to acknowledge. It places individual educators in an exposed position, particularly when the colleague holds more seniority or institutional authority. The card is not asking the educator to resolve this alone. It is asking them to name it, document it, and ensure it reaches the right hands.

❓ The question to hold

“What is the cost to students of this going unaddressed, and what support do I need to raise it safely?”

CARD 6

When the Educator Feels Exposed or Uncertain



For when the educator themselves is under pressure, doubting their mandate, or carrying the weight of this work without adequate support.

🕒 Micro-routine

Name the feeling to yourself. Do not absorb it alone. Reach for a colleague, a union representative, or a trusted peer.

🎯 Worked prompt

To a trusted colleague or mentor: "I had a difficult moment in class today and I want to think it through. Can we find ten minutes?"

To yourself, before a challenging lesson or conversation: "My role is to create conditions for safe, accurate, critical learning. I am not responsible for resolving every political tension this topic carries. I do this work with others, not alone."

🔍 What to watch for

Educators working on inclusion and anti-rights resilience frequently carry emotional and professional risk that is not evenly distributed across staff. Those who are themselves LGBTQI, from racialised or minoritised communities, or who have personal stakes in this work may feel this weight differently and more acutely. That is not incidental. It reflects the same uneven distribution of risk that the tool asks students to notice in the world beyond school.

? The question to hold

"What do I need right now, and who in my institution is responsible for making sure I have it?"

3.6. Staffroom Learning: Peer Reflection and Micro-Continuous Professional Development (micro-CPD)

International evidence²⁵ shows that collaborative professional learning increases confidence, reduces isolation, and improves educators' ability to handle sensitive issues.

Peer Triad Template (12–15 minutes)

Round 1: What went well this week? (2 minutes each.)

Round 2: A challenge related to dialogue, misinformation, disinformation, or inclusion (2 minutes each.)

Round 3: One small experiment to try next week (1 minute each.)

Mentoring Pair Prompt

"Describe a classroom moment where misinformation and disinformation or a stereotype surfaced. What did you do? What might you try next time?"

Visual Prompts for Staffrooms

Printable prompts include:

- Pause > Clarify > Respond.
- Language shapes safety.
- You are not alone—refer early, not late.

These reinforce a whole-school rather than teacher-isolated culture.

²⁵ OECD (2025). Results from TALIS 2024: The State of Teaching. Paris: OECD Publishing.

3.7. Responsibility and Limits: Why Classroom Strategies Alone are Not Enough

The routines above help prevent escalation, strengthen student criticality, and support healthy dialogue. However, classrooms exist within broader institutional and community ecosystems. Research consistently shows that educators cannot manage tensions or opposition without institutional support.

- **Classroom routines** > first line of prevention
- **Restorative tools** > first line of response
- **Staffroom learning** > sustained professional confidence
- **School Playbook (Section 4)** > institutional safety net when incidents exceed classroom management

This alignment ensures that educators are supported by whole-school responsibility rather than individual resilience.

Cross References:

*For escalation pathways, documentation, leadership responsibilities, and staff protection, see Section 4: School Playbook. For policy rationale and system-level obligations, see 🌸 **Tool 1**. Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools*



DO NOT
ENTER

EXIT

4. School Playbook: Responding to Tensions and Opposition



Purpose

This section supports schools to anticipate, respond to, and learn from tensions or opposition that may arise when addressing anti-rights narratives, misinformation, disinformation, or polarised community pressure related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics.

- It frames safety as a whole-school responsibility, not a burden carried by individual teachers. The Playbook provides:
- first-line de-escalation and referral clarity, for educators;
- institutional safeguarding and communication pathways, for school leaders;
- defined support and protection roles, for counsellors and unions.

When this section is relevant

Schools may need this Playbook when:

- classroom discussions escalate beyond pedagogical management;
- misinformation and disinformation or anti-rights narratives circulate among students or parents;
- staff are targeted through complaints, social media, or organised pressure;
- educators feel uncertain about when to pause, document, or escalate.

The School Playbook builds directly on the classroom strategies in Section 3 and prepares the ground for the community-facing alliances in Section 5.

Who this section is for (and when)

TABLE 9. AUDIENCE GUIDE: SCHOOL PLAYBOOK

AUDIENCE	TYPICAL USE MOMENTS
Educators	Immediate de-escalation steps, documentation basics, and clarity on when to refer.
School leaders	Institutional safeguarding, communication with families and external actors, and staff protection.
Counsellors and well-being staff	Pastoral support, triage, and referrals.
Unions and external partners	Protection of professional rights, legal guidance, and staff advocacy.

What this looks like in practice

The guidance that follows moves from first principles to first-line responses: core principles that frame the school's shared responsibility, a rapid decision guide for educators, de-escalation tools for classroom moments, documentation and reporting pathways, and leadership-level safeguards for when pressure escalates to or comes from beyond the classroom. Each component is designed to reduce isolation, clarify roles, and ensure that no educator is left to manage opposition alone.

4.1. Core Principles



1. Safety is systemic

School safety is a leadership duty. Teachers should never face community pressure alone.



2. Prevention is more powerful than reaction

Preventative routines reduce escalation and normalise respectful disagreement.



3. Documentation protects everyone

Brief, factual, proportionate records protect educators, support safeguarding and signal accountability.



4. De-escalation is not silence

Keep difficult topics teachable. Maintain enquiry, accuracy and dignity without personal confrontation.



5. Staff are rights-holders

Educators need access to unions, leadership and clear referral pathways.

4.2. Quick Decision Guide for Educators

A practical “If X happens, do Y” model to support rapid reasoning and reduce isolation.

TABLE 10. RAPID RESPONSE GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

SCENARIO	YOUR IMMEDIATE FOLLOW-UP STEP	MOVE	AVOID
Misinformation and disinformation appear in class	Use Critical Questioning Routine.	✓ Log a brief note; inform pastoral lead if relevant.	✗ Debating student identity or beliefs.
Rising tension and polarisation	Pause > Restorative questions.	✓ Follow up with the staff mentor or leadership.	✗ Pushing ahead without acknowledging tension.
A student feels targeted	Stop activity, validate feelings.	✓ Safeguarding steps and factual documentation.	✗ Asking the student to explain or defend.
Parent complaint escalates	Acknowledge receipt; refer immediately to leadership.	✓ Keep factual notes only.	✗ Responding emotionally or outside protocol.
Staff member targeted online	Screenshot; report; contact union.	✓ Leadership conducts a risk assessment.	✗ Responding publicly to the harassment.

This grid enables rapid, proportionate action while keeping educators within professional and safeguarding boundaries.

4.3. De-escalation Tool for Classrooms

These micro-moves help maintain psychological safety without compromising the lesson.

A. RESET QUESTIONS

Use when conversations become heated or confused:

- "What do we need to continue safely?"
- "Let's slow down — what claim are we checking?"
- "Which voices are missing, and how can we include them respectfully?"

These questions re-centre dignity and evidence without escalating.

B. GROUND RULES MICRO-RESET

Reaffirm shared norms established at the start of term (see Section 3):

- Challenge ideas, not people;
- Curiosity over certainty;
- Take space/make space;
- No outing, no unsafe disclosure.

Ground rules should always precede, not follow, contentious discussions.

C. TIME-OUT > TIME-IN PROTOCOL

Time-Out: Silent writing: "To continue safely, I need..."

Time-In: Two or three statements shared; return to structured routine (**Critical Questioning Routine** or dialogical cycle).

This combines affective regulation with cognitive re-centring.

D. WHEN DISCUSSION MUST STOP

Stop immediately if:

- A student is distressed;
- Identities or family beliefs are attacked;
- Safeguarding concerns arise;
- Conspiracy narratives dominate.

Teacher script: "We're going to pause here. Our priority is safety and respect. We will return to this with the right support."

Safeguarding note

Stopping a discussion is not failure, but an appropriate professional response when safety, dignity, or safeguarding is at risk.

4.4. Documentation and Reporting Pathways

The template below can be used by different actors, as needed, to record incidents and circulate the information to the relevant stakeholders. Documentation should be factual, concise, and proportionate.

Minimal Documentation Template

Date/Time:

Class/Group:

Location: (e.g. playground, classroom, toilets, online)

Trigger: (e.g. comment, rumour, conflict)

What happened: (2–3 sentences, factual only)

Your response: (how you felt, thought, reacted' or 'what actions you took')

Follow-up needed:

Who was informed: (leadership, safeguarding, counsellor)

Leadership Responsibilities

- Maintain a secure central incident log.
- Review trends regularly to identify systemic issues.
- Ensure no staff member handles incidents alone.
- Communicate with parents proportionately, clearly, and factually.
- Coordinate with unions when staff protection is needed.

4.5. Protecting Educators

This section makes educator protection explicit and visible.

1. Union Liaison

Staff should be proactively informed about:

- rights around harassment;
- internal complaint mechanisms;
- support available for online targeting;
- steps in grievance or escalation pathways.

2. “Pre-Prepared Statements” for Pressure Points

Teachers often need simple, safe phrasing under pressure, such as:

- “My role is to give accurate information so we can learn safely. Let’s check the evidence.”
- “I know this feels sensitive. We will handle it with dignity for everyone.”
- “I can’t comment on personal identities, but I can help us examine the claim.”

These support emotional regulation and boundary maintenance.

3. Staff Well-being and Care

- Post-incident debrief with leadership;
- Access to pastoral or peer support;
- Clear plan if staff safety is compromised;
- Assurance that no teacher will be publicly isolated.

These measures reflect trauma-informed practice and recognise educators as rights-holders.

4.6. Leadership Playbook (School-Level Safeguards)

Institutional clarity reduces escalation and protects staff and students.

BEFORE INCIDENTS

- Publish a school-wide stance on inclusion and safety;
- Train all staff on routines from Sections 3 and 4;
- Establish a single escalation pathway;
- Communicate with parents annually about inclusion, rights, and well-being.

DURING INCIDENTS

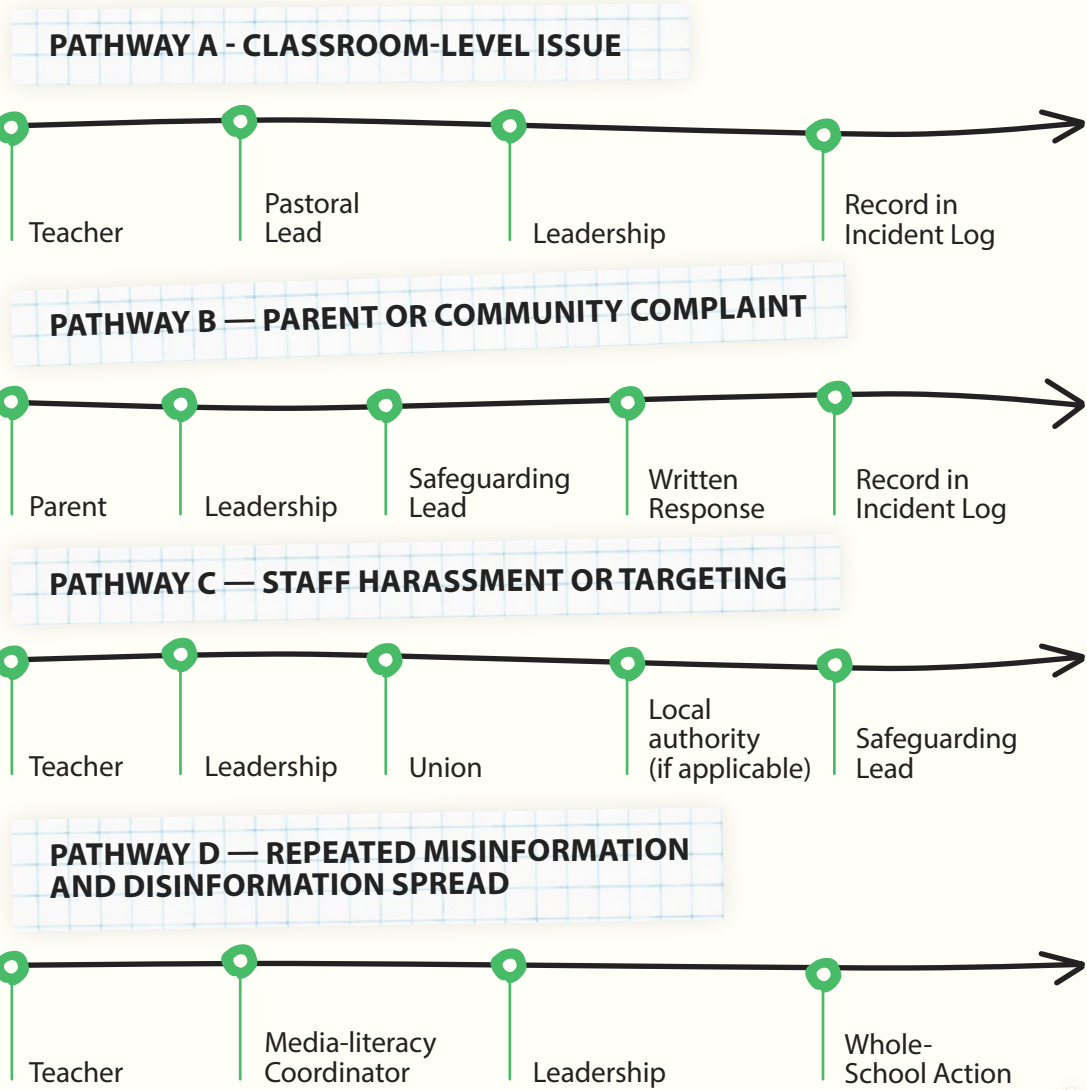
- Shield educators from direct confrontation;
- Ensure leadership handles parent communication, not teachers;
- Apply safeguarding consistently;
- Avoid reactive policy changes driven by pressure.

AFTER INCIDENTS

- Check staff well-being;
- Conduct a factual, non-blame review;
- Share learning briefly at a staff meeting;
- Refine preventive routines as needed.

4.7. Referral Pathways (Template)

These pathways ensure that responsibility moves up and out, rather than remaining with individual educators. These pathways show how schools might respond to different situations. They aren't steps in a single process, and there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Schools can adapt them to their own structures, responsibilities and existing safeguarding and reporting procedures. In practice, some steps may need to happen at the same time, depending on the situation. The scenarios in Section 4.8 offer some examples of how these pathways might be used in practice.



4.8. Opposition Scenarios: Quick Responses

The scenarios in **Table 11** reflect common patterns identified across Europe.²⁶

TABLE 11. COMMON OPPOSITION SCENARIOS AND COORDINATED RESPONSES

SCENARIO	TEACHER RESPONSE	LEADERSHIP FOLLOW-UP
Parent accuses teacher of “gender ideology”	“Leadership will respond.” Stick to factual boundaries.	Leadership uses a template letter; schedules a meeting if appropriate.
Student repeats anti-trans claim	Use CQR + neutral evidence.	Pastoral check-in with affected students; logs incident.
Local actor spreads misinformation and disinformation about school	Notify leadership.	Leadership manages external communication; teachers step back.
Teacher feels unsafe after online post	Screenshot > report > union contact.	Risk assessment; adjustments to workload or visibility if needed.

26 Education International (2024). Report on the 2024 Education International Quadrennial Gender Survey. Brussels: Education International.

4.9. What Travels and What Needs Adaptation

Practices that travel well

- Critical Questioning Routine and Dialogical Routines;
- Restorative micro-moves;
- Brief, factual documentation;
- Leadership accountability;
- Union liaison and staff protection measures.



Practices requiring local adaptation

- Safeguarding and legal obligations;
- Parental communication norms;
- Complaint mechanisms;
- Faith-based school protocols;
- Data protection rules beyond the GDPR minimum;
- National curricula and teacher autonomy levels.



Adaptation is professional contextualisation grounded in evidence and cultural competence.

Cross References:

*For system-level mandates and legal frameworks, see 🌸 **Tool 1**. Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools*

For alliance-building beyond the school, see Section 5. Alliances Beyond the Classroom of this tool.

ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES THAT TRAVEL

Purpose

In moments of pressure, schools often feel pushed to counter anti-rights narratives directly. Evidence suggests that escalation, debate, or reactive messaging can unintentionally amplify misinformation and disinformation. This tool therefore prioritises alternative narratives: steady, values-anchored framing that reduces heat while maintaining clarity.

Principles

Effective alternative narratives:

- Anchor in shared values (safety, dignity, well-being, learning);
- Avoid personalisation (no naming or debating individuals);
- Stay procedural and educational, not ideological;
- Reduce urgency and emotion, rather than matching it;
- Shift attention from controversy to practice.

What this Looks Like in Practice

Instead of responding to claims, schools emphasise:

- What they are responsible for (student safety, learning environments);
- How decisions are made (curriculum, safeguarding, professional standards);
- What routines are in place (media literacy, respectful dialogue).

Example Framings

- *"Our role is to help students think critically and treat one another with dignity."*
- *"We follow national guidance on well-being and safeguarding in age-appropriate ways."*
- *"We focus on skills for navigating information, not on promoting beliefs."*

These statements redirect attention without validating or amplifying hostile claims.

Do-No-Harm Principle

Avoid:

- Engaging in online debate threads;
- Responding point-by-point to misinformation and disinformation;
- Naming individual students, families, or identities under pressure;
- Adopting activist slogans in institutional communication;
- Speaking outside established safeguarding and leadership protocols.

Why this Matters?

Research shows that anti-rights narratives gain traction when schools appear defensive, inconsistent, or reactive. Calm, values-based alternatives protect staff, reduce escalation, and reinforce institutional legitimacy.²⁷

Cross –References:

- *Classroom routines for critical engagement: Section 3: Classroom Strategies*
- *Leadership protocols for escalation and communication: Section 4: School Playbook*
- *Community dialogue and alliances: Section 5: Alliances Beyond the Classroom*

27 Education International (2024). Report on the 2024 Education International Quadrennial Gender Survey. Brussels: Education International.

UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education. Paris: UNESCO.



4.10. When Misinformation, Disinformation or Anti-Rights Narratives Come from Staff

Why this Matters?

In most schools, staff act in good faith and with commitment to student well-being. However, leadership also needs clarity for the less common situations where misinformation, disinformation, or anti-rights narratives, emerge within the school community.

Anti-rights pressure does not always come from external actors. When it arises internally, schools must respond in ways that protect students, uphold professional standards, and maintain institutional integrity. These situations require clear, proportionate, and lawful responses.

Leadership Approach

Responses should be:

- Procedural, not punitive.
- Focused on professional conduct and impact, not personal beliefs.
- Anchored in safeguarding, duty of care, and professional standards.
- Handled through existing Human Resources (HR) or safeguarding processes.
- Documented, consistent, and proportionate.

Public confrontation, informal correction, or ad hoc disciplinary action should be avoided, as these can escalate conflict and undermine institutional coherence.

Practical Steps

When staff behaviour undermines agreed safeguarding, inclusion, or factual accuracy, leadership should:

1. **Record the incident factually**, noting context and potential impact on students, parents, or staff.
2. **Assess the issue through existing obligations**, including safeguarding, equality duties, and professional standards.
3. **Use established processes** (e.g. supervision, HR procedures, safeguarding pathways) rather than creating new mechanisms.
4. **Reaffirm institutional expectations** around accuracy, safety, respect, and student well-being.
5. **Provide proportionate support**, such as guidance, supervision, or targeted professional development, where appropriate.

Safeguarding Note

If staff actions cause harm, distress, or increased risk to students, leadership has a clear duty to act promptly to protect learners and educators, and uphold institutional responsibilities.

What this Guidance Does Not Do

This section does not police personal beliefs, impose ideological positions, or introduce new disciplinary frameworks. Its purpose is to ensure that schools respond lawfully, consistently, and protectively using systems that already exist.

Cross –References:

- *Classroom boundaries and de-escalation: Section 3: Classroom Strategies*
- *Incident handling and documentation: Section 4: School Playbook*
- *Professional standards and mandates, see 🌸 **Tool 1: Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools***



5. Alliances Beyond the Classroom



Purpose

This section supports schools to build, sustain, and govern alliances beyond the classroom in order to respond effectively to anti-rights narratives, misinformation, disinformation, and community-level pressure.

It recognises that classroom strategies (see Section 3) and institutional safeguards (see Section 4) are only effective when embedded in wider relational ecosystems involving families, civil society, local authorities, and professional networks.

When this section is relevant

Schools will need this section if or when:

- tensions extend beyond the classroom into families or communities;
- misinformation and disinformation circulate through informal channels (social media, parent networks, religious groups);
- staff feel exposed or isolated when dealing with controversy;
- leadership needs to stabilise communication and responsibility beyond the school;
- partnerships with NGOs or authorities are being considered or reviewed.

Who this section is for (and when)

TABLE 12. AUDIENCE GUIDE: ALLIANCES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

AUDIENCE	TYPICAL USE MOMENTS
School leaders	Coordinating communication, partnerships, and shared responsibility.
Educators	Understanding boundaries, referral routes, and when not to engage alone.
Counsellors and well-being staff	Supporting relational repair and trauma-informed responses.
NGOs and youth organisations	Engaging as co-learning partners within safeguarding limits.
Local authorities, equality bodies, inspectorates	Providing legal clarity, mediation, and system-level support.

What it looks like in practice

The guidance that follows moves from the relational foundations of effective alliance-building to the specific contexts in which schools most commonly need external support: working with parents and caregivers, partnering with NGOs and youth organisations, engaging local authorities and equality bodies, and managing the moments when dialogue becomes conflict. Throughout, the emphasis is on shared responsibility, clear boundaries, and the understanding that sustaining inclusive education is a community undertaking, not a school’s burden to carry alone.

5.1. Why Alliances Matter

Schools do not operate in isolation. Anti-rights discourse circulates through homes, local politics, religious institutions, community networks, and online spaces. Classroom work is therefore only effective when embedded within wider ecosystems of trust, communication, and shared responsibility.

European research across inclusive education studies,²⁸ intercultural education,²⁹ and whole-school prevention models³⁰ shows that sustained change depends on structures that extend beyond individual teachers, and beyond the school walls.

Reviews of family–school relationships similarly highlight that student success is strongly associated with the quality of collaboration between families and schools, though such collaboration is often uneven and under-supported.³¹

Effective alliances should not be treated as persuasion campaigns. Grounded in relational pedagogy, transparency, and mutual learning, they become a way of practising democracy itself: negotiating difference, fostering accountability, and co-constructing safer school communities.

28 Booth, T., and Ainscow, M. (2016). *The index for inclusion: A guide to school development led by inclusive values* (4th ed.). Cambridge: Index for Inclusion Network.

29 Macia, M. y Torrelles, À. (2021). 'Intercultural Education in Schools: From Policies to Practices in Catalonia (Spain)'. *Campos en Ciencias Sociales*, 9(1).

30 Roland, E., Bru, E., Midthassel, U. V., and Vaaland, G. S. (2010). 'The zero programme against bullying: Effects of the programme in the context of the Norwegian manifesto against bullying'. *Social Psychology of Education*, 13(1), pp. 41–55.

31 Dusi, P. (2012). 'The family–school relationships in Europe: A research review'. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 2(1), 13–33.

Van Mieghem, A., Verschueren, K., Petry, K., and Struyf, E. (2018). 'An analysis of research on inclusive education: a systematic search and meta review'. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(6), pp. 675–689.

TABLE 13. PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE ALLIANCES

PRINCIPLE	WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE
Mutual learning, not persuasion	Community relations improve when schools frame engagement as co-learning, rather than attempts to overrule families or impose belief systems. ³² Alliances are grounded in respect, clarity, and shared goals for student well-being.
Transparency builds trust	Clear communication about policies, processes, and classroom approaches reduces fear, misinformation and disinformation. ³³
Shared responsibility reduces staff vulnerability	Teachers should not be left alone when concerns escalate. Community-facing communication, particularly under pressure, should be coordinated by leadership.
Local contexts shape possibilities	Family dynamics, political climates, and cultural norms vary. Tools must allow adaptation across rural, urban, faith-based, migrant-majority, under-resourced, or politically sensitive settings. ³⁴

32 European Commission (2023). Promoting diversity and inclusion in schools in Europe. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education. Paris: UNESCO.

33 Grant, K. B., and Ray, J. (2013). *Home, school, and community collaboration: Culturally responsive family engagement (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

34 Dusi, P. (2012). 'The family-school relationships in Europe: A research review'. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 2(1), 13–33

Turney, K., and Kao, G. (2009). 'Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged?' *The Journal of Educational Research*, 102(4), pp. 257–271

Martin, S., Horgan, D., and Looney, E. (2025). 'Migrant parents' school involvement: Extent, barriers and opportunities'. *Educational Research*, 67(3), pp. 385–405.

Private, Contracted, and Faith-Based Educational Settings

Across Europe, many students are educated in private schools, publicly funded but privately governed institutions, or faith-based settings. These schools operate within diverse governance arrangements, pedagogical traditions, and community expectations, and are often among the first to experience pressure when anti-rights narratives target education.

This tool is designed to apply across these mixed systems. It does not assume a single school model, nor does it treat inclusion as dependent on institutional ethos. Instead, it focuses on shared duties that cut across governance structures, including safeguarding, child protection, professional standards, and institutional accountability.

In such contexts, alliances are particularly important. Values-based entry points, such as student well-being, dignity, pastoral care, and the prevention of harm, often provide more effective foundations for engagement than technical policy language alone. Leadership responsibility is central: school leaders should hold ownership of contentious communication, buffer individual educators from conflict, and ensure that concerns are routed through established safeguarding, contractual, or inspection frameworks rather than personal debate.

This approach enables schools across different governance arrangements to uphold inclusive and safe practice without debating theology, prescribing curriculum, or singling out specific institutional models.

5.2. Working with Parents and Caregivers: Trust Before Technique

Engagement with families is relational work grounded in trust, clarity, and shared responsibility. It is not an administrative task delegated to individual educators.

European research consistently shows that when communication foregrounds shared commitments (well-being, dignity, and academic success), conflict decreases and cooperation increases.³⁵

Research on culturally responsive family engagement emphasises accessible communication, recognition of families' own knowledge and understanding ("funds of knowledge"), and active efforts to reduce structural barriers, particularly for migrant families.³⁶ In contexts shaped by anti-rights narratives, parents more often experience uncertainty rather than hostility. Slow, transparent, value-anchored communication supports constructive engagement, especially when it acknowledges families' concerns and builds on shared aspirations for children.

35 Dusi, P. (2012). 'The family-school relationships in Europe: A research review'. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 2(1), 13–33.

Durišić, M., and Bunijevac, M. (2017). 'Parental involvement as an important factor for successful education'. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 7(3), 137–153.

Macia, M., y Torrelles, À. (2021). 'Intercultural Education in Schools: From Policies to Practices in Catalonia (Spain)'. *Campos en Ciencias Sociales*, 9(1).

36 Grant, K. B., and Ray, J. (2013). *Home, school, and community collaboration: Culturally responsive family engagement* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Turney, K., and Kao, G. (2009). 'Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged?' *The Journal of Educational Research*, 102(4), pp. 257–271.

Martin, S., Horgan, D., and Looney, E. (2025). 'Migrant parents' school involvement: Extent, barriers and opportunities'. *Educational Research*, 67(3), pp. 385–405.

Gerzon-Kessler, A. (2024, March 15). '5 culturally responsive family engagement strategies'. *Edutopia*, 15 March. Available at: <https://www.edutopia.org>.

Leadership – not individual teachers – should hold primary responsibility for contentious issues to protect professional boundaries and prevent individualisation of risk. This approach aligns with democratic and relational pedagogy, and counters the tendency to place the burden of “handling parents” solely on classroom teachers. This leadership-led approach is particularly important in private, contracted, and faith-based settings, where individual teachers may face heightened scrutiny and should not be positioned as institutional spokespersons.

Safeguarding and responsibility note

Leadership, not individual teachers, should hold responsibility for contentious issues. This protects professional boundaries and prevents the individualisation of risk.

5.2.1. Principles for Constructive Dialogue

- Start from shared values: safety, dignity, well-being, and academic success.
- Use plain, non-technical language, avoiding SOGIESC jargon unless relevant and context-sensitive.
- Offer evidence-based explanations rooted in child development, rights, and pedagogy.
- Keep communication proportionate: avoid over-reacting to minor concerns or rumours.
- Be attentive to barriers faced by migrant and minoritised parents (language, unfamiliarity with school systems, prior experiences of exclusion) and adjust formats accordingly.³⁷

37 Turney, K., and Kao, G. (2009). ‘Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged?’ *The Journal of Educational Research*, 102(4), pp. 257–271.

Martin, S., Horgan, D., and Looney, E. (2025). ‘Migrant parents’ school involvement: Extent, barriers and opportunities.’ *Educational Research*, 67(3), pp. 385–405.

5.2.2. Communication Templates (Examples)

These templates model boundary-holding communication that is calm, factual, values-anchored, and referral-based.

Short explanation to a parent asking, “Why are you teaching this?”

“Our school follows national and European guidance on inclusion and well-being. We help students develop critical thinking, respect for others, and the skills to navigate misinformation and disinformation. These topics are taught in age-appropriate ways and always centred on student safety and dignity.”

When responding to concerns influenced by anti-rights narratives

“I understand this topic can feel sensitive. Our focus is on ensuring all students learn safely and respectfully. I will refer your concern to our leadership team so we can follow our usual procedure.”

Parent meeting protocol (leadership-led)

1. Begin with shared values.
2. Clarify the factual concern.
3. Establish what the school is already doing.
4. Offer to follow up with written information.
5. Avoid debating identities or beliefs.
6. Keep the meeting within safeguarding and professional boundaries.

5.3. Partnerships with NGOs and Youth Organisations: Extending the Educational Imagination

Schools working in isolation struggle to address misinformation, disinformation, prejudice, anti-rights, and anti-SOGIESC related mobilisation. Partnerships with NGOs and youth organisations can provide complementary expertise, especially in media literacy, anti-bullying, and LGBTQI inclusion.

Partnerships are most effective when understood as spaces of co-learning, rather than one-off external interventions. Research shows that co-facilitated programmes strengthen reflective capacity and reduce teacher isolation.³⁸ Systematic work on culturally relevant teacher education across Europe similarly underscores the importance of collaborative learning arrangements and critical reflection on power, identity, and curriculum.³⁹

Partnerships are therefore best understood as spaces of co-learning, as opposed to one-off external interventions.

5.3.1. Why Partnerships Matter

Collaboration with civil society can strengthen:

- student belonging and visibility;
- school capacity to address misinformation, disinformation, and prejudice;
- early identification of risks and emerging tensions;
- access to credible, rights-affirming information;
- broader community trust.⁴⁰

38 Essomba, M. À. (2025). 'Presentació: Educació per a tothom avui. Diversitat, equitat i inclusió'. *Educar (Bellaterra, Spain)*, 61(1), 7–18.

Escobedo Peiro, P., et al. (2021). 'De quién es la escuela? la voz del alumnado y de las familias en la construcción de una escuela inclusiva'. *Revista De Educación Inclusiva*, 14(2), 166–181.

39 Koukoulidis, N. M., Kotluk, N., and Brown, J. C. (2024). 'The status of culturally relevant teacher education in the European context: A systematic review of research'. *Review of Education*, 12(3), pp. 1–27.

40 UNESCO (2022). Safe, Seen and Included: Report on school-based sexuality education inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Paris: UNESCO.

Education International (2024). Report on the 2024 Education International Quadrennial Gender Survey. Brussels: Education International.

Van Mieghem, A., Verschueren, K., Petry, K., and Struyf, E. (2018). 'An analysis of research on inclusive education: a systematic search and meta review'. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(6), pp. 675–689.



5.3.2. Guidance for Partnership Work

When selecting partners, look for organisations with:

- experience working in schools;
- safeguarding-compliant policies;
- evidence-based resources;
- transparent communication practices;
- an explicit focus on learner well-being.

Practical partnership models

- Guest speakers (with clear pre-briefing and boundaries);
- Co-facilitated workshops (e.g. media literacy, diversity, well-being);
- Student-led initiatives with NGO mentoring;
- Joint parent and community dialogues on inclusion and safety;
- Staff CPD sessions co-designed with trained facilitators;
- Memoranda of Understanding for referrals to community organisations.

Managing risks

- Leadership should coordinate all external partnerships and communications;
- All partners should be briefed on school policies, classroom agreements, and safeguarding duties;
- Provide external partners with a focal point should any issue arise which requires follow up from the school;
- In private or faith-based schools, partnership agreements should explicitly clarify roles, safeguarding responsibilities, and alignment with the school's governance framework before any engagement takes place.

5.4. Working with Local Authorities, Equality Bodies, and Professional Networks

When anti-rights narratives escalate publicly, schools often face heightened exposure. Collaboration with local authorities, ombudspersons, inspectorates, and equality bodies helps ensure that responsibility is institutionally distributed and not disproportionately placed on individual educators. For privately governed or faith-based schools, local authorities, inspectorates, and equality bodies often play a key role in providing legal clarity and external mediation when community pressure escalates.

Research underscores that inclusive school leadership is a structural component of sustaining equity and safety.⁴¹ European work on resilient inclusive systems further emphasises the role of multi-level coordination between schools, municipalities, and national authorities.⁴² These actors help ensure that responsibility for responding to anti-rights discourse is institutionally distributed rather than placed disproportionately on individual educators.

What these actors provide

- Legal clarity and interpretation.
- Mediation of complex cases.
- Alignment with national and European standards.

Examples of useful collaborations

- Joint training with equality bodies on discrimination and human rights law.
- Media-literacy initiatives co-developed with local libraries or youth centres.
- Coordinated responses when misinformation and disinformation about the school spreads locally or online.
- Involvement of child rights offices in supporting vulnerable or targeted students.

⁴¹ De Schauwer, E. D., Van de Putte, I., and de Beco, G. (2019). 'Inclusive Education in Flanders, Belgium: A Country with a Long History of Segregation'. In G. de Beco, S. Quinlivan, and J. E. Lord (Eds.), *The Right to Inclusive Education in International Human Rights Law* (pp. 514–529). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴² European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2024). 'Building Resilience through Inclusive Education Systems (BRIES): Guidance for Establishing a Culture of Effective Communication in Education'. In M. Bilgeri and A. Lecheval (eds). *Odense: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education*.

5.5. The Relational Ecology of a School Community

A school functions as a layered relational ecosystem. At the centre are learners and educators; surrounding them are counsellors, mentors, union representatives, and school leadership. Beyond the school lie parents, NGOs, youth groups, cultural institutions, and community actors. At the outermost layer are authorities, inspectorates, universities, equality bodies, and regional or international institutions such as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and UNESCO.

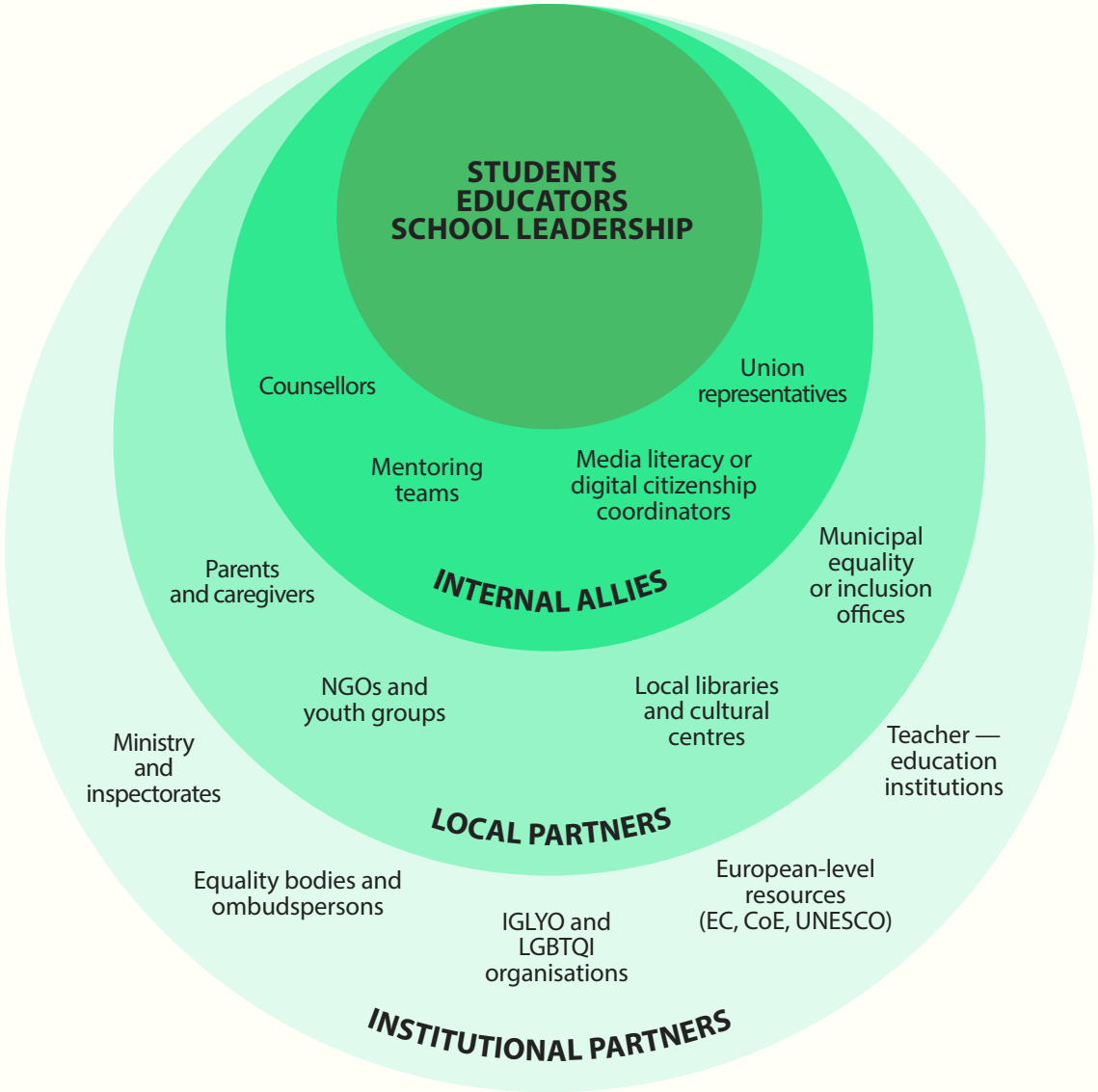
Work on school–family–community partnerships in urban and diverse contexts shows that this ecosystemic perspective is essential for fostering resilience and equity.⁴³

This ecosystemic view shifts the tool away from a teacher-centric burden and towards shared responsibility across the school community and its institutional environment.

43 Bryan, J., Williams, J. M., and Griffin, D. (2020). 'Fostering educational resilience and opportunities in urban schools through equity-focused School–Family–Community partnerships'. *Professional School Counseling*, 23(1_part_2).

Grant, K. B., and Ray, J. (2013). *Home, school, and community collaboration: Culturally responsive family engagement* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (n.d.).

FIGURE 1. SCHOOL–COMMUNITY ECOSYSTEM MAP



5.6. When Dialogue Becomes Conflict

Most conversations about diversity and inclusion proceed without escalation. When tensions do arise, research supports slow, structured, dignity-affirming approaches rather than rigid scripts.⁴⁴

Useful practices include:

- anchoring discussion in shared values;
- distinguishing facts from assumptions;
- maintaining learner-centred focus;
- recognising that some families and staff may be carrying previous experiences of harm or marginalisation;
- escalating early to leadership.

Safeguarding note

Early escalation protects teacher boundaries and prevents harm.

Community dialogue protocol (for leadership-led sessions)

1. State the purpose (e.g., “shared responsibility for safety and well-being”).
2. Ground the conversation in agreed values (respect, accuracy, dignity, participation).
3. Briefly explain relevant curriculum elements, frameworks, and routines.
4. Use a short activity to illustrate critical questioning or rights-based reasoning.
5. Facilitate open dialogue using restorative prompts (e.g., “What are your hopes?”, “What are your concerns?”).
6. Close with 2–3 concrete shared next steps.
7. Follow up with written communication summarising what was agreed.

This protocol can be adapted for different school types and contexts.

⁴⁴ O’Toole, C., and Devaney, C. (2023). ‘Trauma-informed care in education: Reflecting on school-led approaches to engage community and foster resilience’. *International Journal of School Social Work*, 8(1), pp. 1–18.

Nic Dhomhnaill, E., and Lotty, M. (2025). ‘Trauma-informed care in education: Reflecting on school-led interventions to foster community resilience’. *International Journal of School Social Work*, 11(3), pp. 1–17.

5.7. What Travels and What Needs Adaptation

European evidence shows that while democratic pedagogy, transparency, and critical media literacy are widely transferable, their implementation must be locally adapted. Engagement practices differ substantially between, for example, Nordic countries, Southern Europe, faith-based schools, rural communities, and urban multilingual environments.⁴⁵

Practices that travel well



- Transparent communication about values, inclusion, and well-being.
- Partnerships with NGOs experienced in school-based work.
- Restorative and dialogic approaches to disagreement.
- Critical questioning and media-literacy frameworks.
- Shared language agreements and proportionate responses to concerns.

Practices requiring local adaptation



- Norms and expectations around parent engagement.
- The formal authority and role of local authorities and inspectorates.
- Involvement of religious actors and faith-based community leaders.
- Legal responsibilities and safeguarding frameworks.
- Communication style and risk tolerance during public controversy.

Context sensitivity is not dilution; it is a marker of professionalism and cultural competence.

⁴⁵ Dusi, P. (2012). 'The family-school relationships in Europe: A research review'. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 2(1), 13–33.

Koukoulidis, N. M., Kotluk, N., and Brown, J. C. (2024). 'The status of culturally relevant teacher education in the European context: A systematic review of research'. *Review of Education*, 12(3), pp. 1–27.

Martin, S., Horgan, D., and Looney, E. (2025). 'Migrant parents' school involvement: Extent, barriers and opportunities'. *Educational Research*, 67(3), pp. 385–405.

5.8. Conclusion

Alliances beyond the classroom are essential for countering anti-rights discourse. They distribute responsibility, reduce staff isolation, reinforce democratic culture, and connect classroom practice to wider community transformation.

Schools become more resilient by cultivating relationships that share the work of inclusion and protection.

Cross References:

*For implementation and monitoring considerations, see 📖 **Tool 3. Framework for a Training Module on SOGIESC for Educators***

6. Case Vignettes



Purpose

This section uses short, realistic case vignettes to show how the strategies in **Tool 2** work under pressure, in ordinary school settings facing anti-rights narratives, misinformation, disinformation, or community tension.

Vignettes are core pedagogical tools that model:

- classroom routines under pressure;
- leadership protection in practice;
- relational engagement with families and communities;
- adaptation across legal, cultural, and political contexts.

When this section is relevant

Schools and educators will benefit from this section if or when:

- abstract guidance feels difficult to translate into action;
- staff want concrete phrasing and sequencing for sensitive moments;
- leadership needs examples of institutional handling of tensions and opposition;
- communities or families are involved in escalating tensions;
- teams want to reflect together without singling out individuals.

Who this section is for

TABLE 14. AUDIENCE GUIDE: CASE VIGNETTES

AUDIENCE	TYPICAL USE MOMENTS
Educators	Seeing how routines, wording, and boundaries work in real time.
School leaders	Understanding how leadership actions protect staff and stabilise situations.
Counsellors and well-being staff	Identifying points for pastoral support and trauma-aware intervention.
NGOs and youth organisations	Understanding where external partners can provide specialist knowledge, peer support, training input, or referral options, while working within agreed school safeguarding procedures.
Teacher educators and trainers	Using the vignettes as reflective learning tools in pre-service or in-service training, including discussion of professional roles, facilitation choices, and safeguarding boundaries.

What it looks like in practice

The guidance that follows uses practical vignettes to show how the classroom strategies, school-level safeguards and community alliances set out in earlier sections can work together in real school situations. Each vignette presents a context, a challenge, possible actions by educators and school leaders, partnership support, expected outcomes, and considerations for adaptation. The vignettes are not intended as fixed scripts or universal models. They are designed as reflection and planning tools that help schools consider how to respond proportionately, safely, and coherently when SOGIESC inclusion is questioned, misrepresented, or contested. Readers are encouraged to adapt the examples to their legal, institutional, and community contexts, while preserving the core principles of the tool: learner safety, professional confidence, shared responsibility, safeguarding, and alignment with rights-based education.

6.1. Why Vignettes Matter for Educators

Teachers learn most effectively from situated practice; short, realistic narratives that illuminate how other educators navigate complex moments in ordinary school life.

Across Europe, research shows that vignette-based learning:

- Strengthens reflective judgement and teacher agency;⁴⁶
- Supports whole-school understanding of inclusion;⁴⁷
- Models relational dialogue across diverse communities;⁴⁸
- Provides concrete phrasing and sequencing when emotions run high.⁴⁹

These vignettes, therefore, model the full ecosystem of  **Tool 2**: routines, boundaries, leadership support, partnerships, and institutional responsibility.

6.2. How to Read the Vignettes

Each vignette contains:



Readers are encouraged to focus less on replication and more on transferable principles.

46 Chung, J. (2023). 'Research-informed teacher education, teacher autonomy and teacher agency: the example of Finland'. *London Review of Education*, 21(1), 13.

47 Van Mieghem, A., Verschueren, K., Petry, K., and Struyf, E. (2018). 'An analysis of research on inclusive education: a systematic search and meta review'. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(6), pp. 675–689.

Booth, T., and Ainscow, M. (2016). *The index for inclusion: A guide to school development led by inclusive values (4th ed.)*. Cambridge: Index for Inclusion Network.

48 Macia, M. y Torrelles, À. (2021). 'Intercultural Education in Schools: From Policies to Practices in Catalonia (Spain)'. *Campos en Ciencias Sociales*, 9(1).

Dusi, P. (2012). 'The family–school relationships in Europe: A research review'. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 2(1), 13–33.

49 European Commission (2022). Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training. Luxembourg: European Union.

O'Toole, C., and Devaney, C. (2023). 'Trauma-informed care in education: Reflecting on school-led approaches to engage community and foster resilience'. *International Journal of School Social Work*, 8(1), pp. 1–18.



VIGNETTE 1

RURAL OR SMALL-TOWN SCHOOL NAVIGATING COMMUNITY RUMOURS

School Context

A small secondary school in a rural area with limited resources and strong informal community networks.

The Challenge

A Facebook post claims the school is “teaching gender ideology”. Anxiety spreads quickly among families.

Teacher Actions

The teacher uses a structured media-literacy routine:

- Identify the claim.
- Trace its source.
- Test the evidence.

Students practice lateral reading using safe, appropriate examples (health myths, local rumours). The teacher ends with a reflective writing task on “How do we evaluate information we receive online?”

Leadership Actions

- Communicates centrally with families using values-based language.
- Documents concerns and communication.
- Protects teachers from direct online engagement.

Community and Partnership Actions

The local library co-hosts an adult media-literacy workshop. This builds trust and signals that media literacy is a community-wide skill, not a political issue.

Outcomes

- Parent anxiety decreases.
- Polarisation is avoided.
- Students become more confident in working with evidence.
- Trust is strengthened.

What Travels and What Needs Adaptation



Practices that travel well

- Media-literacy routines.
- Leadership-led communication.
- Value-based framing.
- Partnerships with neutral community actors.



Practices requiring local adaptation

- Tone and formality of communication.
- Type of community partner (library, parish hall, youth centre).
- Whether open sessions are appropriate.

Research Note

Family-school cooperation improves when educators use plain language and shared values.⁵⁰ Rural schools often have fewer external supports; bridge-building is especially important⁵¹ and benefits from trusted local intermediaries, which reduces defensiveness and supports relational pedagogy.

⁵⁰ Grant, K. B., and Ray, J. (2013). *Home, school, and community collaboration: Culturally responsive family engagement* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

⁵¹ Dusi, P. (2012). 'The family-school relationships in Europe: A research review'. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 2(1), 13–33.



VIGNETTE 2

FAITH-BASED SCHOOL RESPONDING TO PARENT CONCERN

School Context

A faith-based primary school with a strong pastoral or religious ethos. Staff want to be inclusive but worry about appearing to contradict the school's ethos or faith tradition in the eyes of parents.

The Challenge

A lesson on family diversity triggers a concern framed through moral language.

Teacher Actions

- Grounds the lesson in shared values: dignity, kindness, belonging.
- Uses examples that reflect family diversity without naming specific identities.
- Avoids debating beliefs or doctrine.
- Frames the lesson in developmental and pedagogical language ("helping children understand their classmates' realities").

This approach aligns with relational pedagogy and culturally responsive practice.

Leadership Actions

- Meets the parent using shared-values scripts.
- Clarifies curriculum requirements.
- Shields the teacher from conflict.
- Documents the meeting.

Community and Partnership Actions

Optional: A relevant faith-based education authority, school network, or specialist partner provides professional learning on navigating inclusion within faith-based settings.

Outcomes

- Tension de-escalates.
- Teacher feels protected and supported.
- The class continues learning without disruption.

What Travels and What Needs Adaptation



Practices that travel well

- Grounding discussions in shared values rather than identity politics.
- Leadership ownership.
- Clear communication boundaries.



Practices requiring local adaptation

- Role of faith-based or religious authorities.
- Curriculum constraints.
- Community norms around parental involvement.
- The level of detail that teachers can discuss publicly.

Research Note

Intercultural and values-based approaches reduce defensiveness and foster trust.⁵² Teacher protection is critical in some faith-based settings, where community scrutiny is high.

52 Essomba (2019). Macia, M. y Torrelles, À. (2021). 'Intercultural Education in Schools: From Policies to Practices in Catalonia (Spain)'. *Campos en Ciencias Sociales*, 9(1).



VIGNETTE 3

SUPPORTING A TRANS OR INTERSEX STUDENT

School Context

An urban, multilingual lower-secondary school with diversity policies and no legal impediments, but uneven staff training.

The Challenge

A student changes name and pronouns; misinformation and disinformation circulate among peers.

Teacher Actions

- Offers a brief repair ("Thank you for correcting me; I'll use your name going forward").
- Refreshes classroom agreements on respect and dignity.
- Uses a short stereotype-debrief routine ("Where does this idea come from? What evidence supports it? Who benefits from this narrative?").
- Centres the conversation on well-being and safety, avoiding identity debates.

Leadership Actions

- Documents the incident.
- Ensures consistency across staff.
- Reviews diversity policies to address social transitions of students.
- Reinforces anti-bullying responsibilities.

Community and Partnership Actions

- Counsellor check-ins.
- General NGO-led workshop on stereotypes and belonging.

Outcomes

- Student safety improves.
- Peer comments decrease.
- Staff clarity increases.

What Travels and What Needs Adaptation



Practices that travel well

- Name-pronoun affirmation.
- Classroom agreement refresh.
- Leadership documentation and follow-up.
- Anti-bullying procedures.



Practices requiring local adaptation

- Legal requirements for record changes.
- NGO involvement and availability.
- Parental involvement norms.

Research Note

Consistent affirmation improves psychological safety.⁵³ Stereotype debriefing builds critical literacy and reduces prejudice.⁵⁴ Whole-school consistency is more protective than isolated teacher action.⁵⁵

⁵³ UNESCO (2022). Safe, Seen and Included: Report on school-based sexuality education inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Paris: UNESCO.

⁵⁴ European Commission (2022). Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

⁵⁵ Van Mieghem, A., Verschueren, K., Petry, K., and Struyf, E. (2018). 'An analysis of research on inclusive education: a systematic search and meta review'. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(6), pp. 675–689.



VIGNETTE 4

COMMUNITY ESCALATION IN A POLITICALLY POLARISED CONTEXT

School Context

A secondary school in a politically polarised environment where public debates on gender are intense and often politicised.

The Challenge

A media literacy task is misrepresented as “activism”. Online mobilisation follows.

Teacher Actions

- Maintain routine teaching.
- Avoid public engagement.
- Reinforce evidence-based discussion.

Leadership Actions

- Activates the incident cycle: anticipate > act > review.
- Coordinates external communication.
- Notifies the local authority for guidance.
- Alerts the equality body for procedural clarity.
- Sends a single coordinated message to parents explaining:
 - curriculum requirements;
 - the school’s values;
 - the purpose of media literacy.
- Protects staff from exposure.

Community and Partnership Actions

A community youth centre hosts a public session focusing on online misinformation and disinformation. Provision of staff mental health and well-being support by teacher unions, health services, or local NGOs.

Outcomes

- Situation stabilises.
- Teachers report reduced stress.
- Public misinformation and disinformation decline.

What Travels and What Needs Adaptation



Practices that travel well

- Centralised communication.
- Incident cycle.
- Staff protection measures.
- Documentation.



Practices requiring local adaptation

- Whether public events are safe and appropriate.
- Which authorities to involve.
- Degree of public transparency depending on risk.

Research Note

Studies show educators are at higher risk of harassment in polarised contexts, and coordinated institutional communication is protective.⁵⁶ Media literacy activities reduce susceptibility to polarisation.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Education International (2024). Report on the 2024 Education International Quadrennial Gender Survey. Brussels: Education International.

⁵⁷ Open Society Institute (2023). The Media Literacy Index 2023 Policy brief: Measuring Vulnerability of Societies to Disinformation. Policy brief. New York: OSI.

Safeguarding and responsibility note (applies to all vignettes)

Across all scenarios:

- educators are not left to manage conflict alone;
- leadership owns escalation and communication;
- partnerships operate within safeguarding limits;
- documentation protects staff and students.

This reinforces  **Tool 2's** core principle: whole-school responsibility over individual interventions.

Cross –References:

- *Classroom routines: Section 3. Classroom Strategies*
- *Institutional protection and escalation: Section 4: School Playbook*
- *Community partnerships and communication: Section 5. Alliances Beyond the Classroom*
- *Policy mandates and system-level alignment:  **Tool 1**. Policy Guidance on Addressing SOGIESC-based Bullying in Schools*
- *Implementation and monitoring considerations:  **Tool 3**. Framework for a Training Module on SOGIESC for Educators*

6.3. Conclusion

Across contexts, these vignettes demonstrate that:

- Simple, evidence-based routines prevent escalation;
- Leadership ownership protects staff;
- Partnerships extend school capacity and reduce isolation;
- Adaptation is a professional judgment.

They show how democratic pedagogy, restorative practice, media literacy, and relational engagement operate in real time, under real pressures.

7. Policy and Practice Alignment



European and international education frameworks are often discussed in terms of coherence, consistency, or values alignment. For schools operating in contested or polarised environments, alignment matters for a different reason: protection.

When educators face challenges related to anti-rights narratives, misinformation and disinformation, or community pressure, alignment with recognised policy frameworks provides:

- Defensible routines grounded in accepted educational standards;
- Shared language that reduces personalisation and escalation;
- Institutional backing that shifts responsibility from individual teachers to the school as a whole.

This tool does not ask schools to implement policy frameworks in full. Instead, it supports schools to draw selectively and proportionately on existing frameworks to stabilise practice when tensions arise.

For schools, alignment matters less as policy coherence and more as protection: it provides educators with defensible routines, shared language and institutional backing when challenged.

7.1. Why Alignment Matters in An Era of Anti-Rights Mobilisation

Schools now operate in a political environment in which anti-rights movements increasingly target education as a strategic site of contestation. These movements work across civil society, religious networks, online ecosystems, and political institutions, often using misinformation and disinformation about “gender ideology”, “parental rights”, or “threats to childhood innocence” to mobilise fear and disrupt inclusive practice.

Research by Education International,⁵⁸ UNESCO,⁵⁹ and European equality bodies shows consistent patterns across contexts:

- Educators experience pressure to self-censor, particularly around gender, sexuality, and diversity.
- School leaders face coordinated complaints and organised campaigns, often fuelled by misinformation and disinformation, or selective interpretations of policy.
- Gaps between national frameworks and school-level implementation become strategic vulnerabilities, exploited to challenge inclusive practice.
- Students—especially trans, non-binary, and intersex young people—experience heightened invisibility or exposure when schools retreat due to fear, confusion, or public pressure.

Policy–practice alignment is therefore not only an administrative necessity; it is a protective strategy. When schools can anchor routines, communication, and safeguarding processes in recognised frameworks, it becomes harder for anti-rights actors to portray inclusive practice as ideological, unlawful, or optional.

This inclusive education toolkit strengthens that alignment by translating broad frameworks into everyday routines, clear safeguarding pathways, and consistent communication practices that can withstand scrutiny and political pressure.

58 Education International (2024). Report on the 2024 Education International Quadrennial Gender Survey. Brussels: Education International.

59 UNESCO (2024). Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education. Paris: UNESCO.

7.2. Where Anti-Rights Narratives Exploit Systemic Gaps

Across Europe, anti-rights mobilisation tends to intervene at points where education systems show weak, uneven, or unclear implementation.

A. Ambiguity around rights and curriculum.

Where curriculum guidance is open to interpretation or inconsistently communicated, misinformation and disinformation flourish. Anti-rights narratives commonly exploit:

- Confusion over “parental rights”;
- Misunderstandings about what inclusion entails; and
- Claims that educators lack a mandate to teach about diversity, sexuality, gender, or digital citizenship

Clear, policy-aligned routines and communication reduce this ambiguity and limit room for misinterpretation. This is further developed in 📖 **Tool 3**.

B. Insufficient safeguarding and protection for educators

Educators and school leaders are increasingly subject to harassment, online attacks, and coordinated complaints. Where documentation, referral pathways, and leadership responsibilities are unclear, staff are left exposed, and risk escalates.

C. Fragmented school-family communication

Anti-rights narratives often enter schools through informal channels, such as messaging apps, social media groups, parent networks, or religious communities. When formal communication from schools is inconsistent or delayed, misinformation and disinformation spreads faster than accurate information. Section 5’s emphasis on relational, values-anchored communication directly addresses this vulnerability.

D. Variability in teacher autonomy and workload

Findings from TALIS 2024 show that educators facing low autonomy, high workload, or limited peer support struggle most to sustain inclusive practice. Anti-rights narratives

often frame inclusion as an additional burden, exploiting these pressures. Time-efficient, pedagogically-aligned routines help mitigate this risk.

7.3. How Practice Can Strengthen Policy Implementation

European and international policy frameworks (Council of Europe, European Commission, UNESCO, and OECD) articulate rights-based expectations for schools, but they rarely specify how these commitments are enacted in daily practice.

Practice-level alignment strengthens implementation in four key ways:



1. Translating values into routines

Critical questioning, media and information literacy routines, and dialogical learning make curriculum and digital citizenship visible, age-appropriate, and feasible.



2. Embedding safeguarding and accountability

Documentation templates, referral pathways, and clear leadership responsibilities support transparency and protect both educators and students when tensions arise.



3. Supporting democratic and relational culture

Restorative dialogue, inclusive communication with families, and co-learning partnerships with civil society enable schools to practise democratic culture.



4. Enabling adaptation across contexts

Given the diversity of European education systems, practice-level guidance must clarify what travels across contexts and what requires adaptation: legal frameworks, communication norms, authority structures, and community expectations.

7.4. Synergy Across the Three Education Tools

For coherence across the three education tools – policy guidance, educator-facing practice, and teacher-training modules – alignment is most effective when the tools operate as a connected ecosystem rather than as standalone resources. This alignment is strengthened when the tools share:

- a common conceptual language (critical literacy, well-being, democratic culture, rights-anchored pedagogy);
- complementary depth, where each tool addresses a different layer of the education system;
- consistent framing of anti-rights mobilisation as a systemic challenge requiring relational, pedagogical, and institutional responses; and
- scalable pathways that move from policy expectations > teacher education > everyday school practice.

Such cross-alignment reduces duplication for stakeholders and ensures that schools receive clear, coherent signals from intergovernmental partners, teacher-education institutions, and civil-society organisations. In contested environments, this coherence itself becomes a form of protection.



7.5. Practical Indicators for Schools (Non-Bureaucratic)

Rather than formal monitoring or compliance-driven evaluation, which risks adding pressure to already stretched staff, schools can use reflective, low-burden indicators to track cultural and pedagogical progress.

Example indicators include:

- Are media literacy or critical-questioning routines used regularly across subjects?
- Are restorative or dialogical methods employed when discussions become tense?
- Do staff understand and use the agreed escalation pathway for incidents?
- Is family communication transparent, proportionate, and anchored in shared values?
- Do educators feel protected and supported by leadership when challenges arise?
- Are partnerships with external actors safeguarding-compliant and context-appropriate?

These indicators prioritise culture, clarity, and relational trust rather than bureaucratic compliance, helping schools reflect on practice without creating new administrative burdens.



7.6. Conclusion

In a landscape where anti-rights mobilisation seeks to sow confusion, erode trust, and undermine inclusive education, alignment between policy and practice functions as a protective structure.

When schools can anchor everyday routines – critical literacy, restorative dialogue, transparent communication, and safeguarding – in recognised frameworks, they strengthen their capacity to navigate public pressure with confidence and integrity.

While policy provides the mandate, teacher education provides the preparation, and practice provides the daily enactment that makes rights meaningful.

Alignment across these layers helps schools build the relational, democratic, and inclusive cultures that enable all students and staff to learn, participate, and thrive.



**Don't forget
to read the other tools!**

Inclusive, democratic education depends on classrooms where every learner is safe, respected and represented. However, schools across Europe are increasingly affected by polarisation, disinformation and organised backlash targeting LGBTQI inclusion, inclusive curricula and comprehensive sexuality education. Tool 2 is designed for teachers, school leaders, education authorities and partners who must navigate these pressures in real time, often with limited guidance and support. It provides an evidence-based, practice-oriented framework to strengthen schools' capacity to respond to hostile narratives, protect staff and students, and uphold democratic, rights-respecting education through realistic routines, decision-making tools and alliance-building strategies with parents, civil society and equality bodies.

Tool 2 is part of the Inclusive Education Toolkit for Preventing and Tackling SOGIESC-based Bullying and Anti-Rights Discourse in Schools, developed within the EU-Council of Europe joint project "Combating anti-LGBTIQ violence and hate speech and strengthening awareness-raising and fact-based narratives about LGBTIQ persons."