

Being Me

kidscape 30
30th anniversary 2015

Isn't it time someone heard your story?



Diversity
Role Models —
Here to
tackle homophobic
bullying

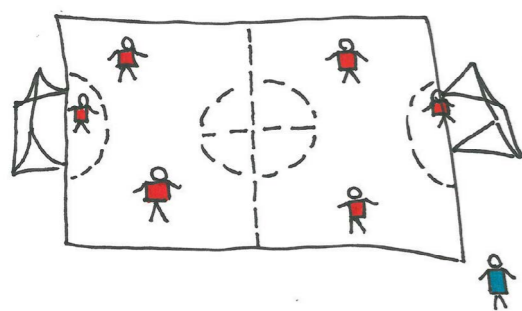
Evan's diary for today!

8am I look at myself in the mirror and try and see what others see. I'm the smallest in my class and I have two left feet when it comes to football, but I can't see anything else that's different. Do my shoes look stupid? Have I got a girly face? Is it my skin?



8.15am "Have you got your swimming stuff?" shouts Mum from downstairs. "Yep," I shout back, my stomach twisting into a knot. I like swimming. I just wish I didn't have to swim at school. Some of my class think it's weird I dive well and dance and that's why they call me names. I'd rather be rubbish at everything and never dance again and be in one of the gangs in my class than be good at something and be picked on. I wonder if I'll get in trouble if I 'forget' my swim stuff again so I have to sit on the side.

9am At school I sit next to Ella. We start talking about what we did at the weekend and she asks me if I saw this dance programme on TV on Saturday. "You girls okay?" comes a voice behind us. Rich again. "Give us a break, Rich. Haven't you got anything better to do?" says Ella. "She your bodyguard, Evie?" says Rich, and the boys all laugh. In case you're wondering, this particular 'Evie' joke started when I wasn't listening to Mrs Geller in an art class in primary school and she asked all the girls to get up and get their bags and I stood up and then realised my mistake. In that one split second my name was changed from Evan to Evie. It might have been funny if it had lasted one class, or even one day. But this was a year ago – in a different school – and the boys from primary school told everyone in this class and they still won't let it go.



10am At break we hang around on the field. Most boys play football and there's nothing much else to do. I've brought in some playing cards – Mum's idea – but can't find anyone to play with. I wonder about joining in the game but I'm rubbish at football, and I feel rubbish about myself standing here as though I'm invisible. It's a relief when the bell goes.

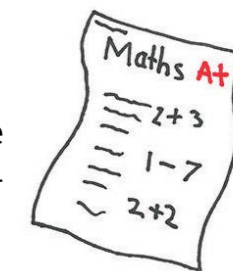
On the way to class Owen comes up behind me and asks why I wasn't playing footie. "Are you gay, girl?" he says into my ear, spitting bits of crisps in a disgusting way on my neck. "There's something wrong with you..."



11am I wonder whether I should tell Mr Cook about this whole Evie gay thing again. Last time he said it was just banter and I should ignore it. "Don't take it too seriously," he said. "Focus on what you're good at, not what you're bad at."

11.15 Maths. But I'm still thinking about Mr Cook. I wasn't actually focusing on what I was bad at when I told him about the boys picking on me. Was he suggesting I was getting called names because I was bad at football? I don't even like football. I just hate being the odd one out, and I hate it that when I mention dancing or get good marks in maths or hang out with Ella I get told what I do is so gay. I'm confused. Just by being me and being quiet and keeping out of their way I seem to make them hate me. But if I ask them to stop – I did try that once in the first term – they start asking if I have something to hide. Last week I went off on my own and tried to ignore them, but then the game was 'find Evie', and I felt really scared.

11.40 I try and concentrate on my maths – I'm usually first to finish these tests – but I really just want to go home. I stare out of the window and think about Jono, my cousin. He's gay – he's at uni now – and I wonder if it feels okay when people call you gay if you really are actually gay. If what sounds like a put-down when you're 12 and not even sure who you want to date (ever!) sounds different when you're 19 and actually going out with a boy. Mum said that is all being gay means. Going out with someone of the same sex rather than the opposite sex. She says lots of people are gay, including famous people and important people in the government. She says it shouldn't be a big deal. No more than her being married to Dad, who's a man, is a big deal.



12 noon Lunchtime, and in the dinner hall I go and sit by Ella and make some excuse about finding out the time of tomorrow's dance class. Ella says her sister wants me to help her with a breakdance move. That gives me an idea. I could start a school dance club at lunchtime.

1.30pm In the afternoon class while everyone is reading I tell Mr Cook about the dance club idea. He likes it and immediately asks the class what they think. Owen pipes up and says he can street dance so Mr Cook asks him to find out who else would like to join – he suggests

Owen and I team up to organise it. Owen? My heart sinks. This was supposed to be something for people who don't like football, not something else for them to do. Owen is obviously unhappy about teaming up with me too. I hear him joke with the boys that this will be for breakdancing, not ballet...not for 'girls'. I can feel my face burning. I look at Mr Cook but he's talking to Kate now about something else.

3.15 When the bell goes I see Owen with a ball under his arm, climbing into a car with some of the other boys from my class. And I see Ella going off arm in arm with her friend Suzanne to catch the bus, and I feel stupid standing there, with no one saying bye to me, or wanting to hang out with me after school. Maybe they're right. Maybe there is something wrong with me.

By Evan!

Sonan's story for you

THE MAGIC SWORD

Once upon a time, on a castle high up on the hill in our town, there lived a magician who owned a magic sword. Word had it that, in days gone by, the magic sword had cut out the tongues of the roaring beasts who had tried to terrify the people who lived in our town.

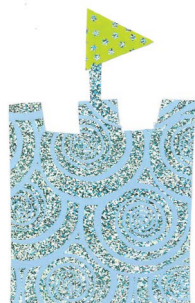


One morning, in the week just before the half-term holidays, Callum brought the sword into class. At least that's what he said it was. He said the magician from the castle had been to a party at their house that weekend and had passed him the sword so he could slay the beasts of Berrisbrook Primary. You'd better slay them quick, I thought, because Miss Russell is going to take that off you and put it in her cupboard with the mobile phones and cans of Coke and Mars Bars she confiscates each morning.

Miss Russell didn't! Callum is one of those boys who's great at everything – he looks great, he's always captain of the football team and he's the boy who Sally – the most popular girl in our class – is sooo in love with. Callum's dad is on TV, so he's always getting to go to cool parties. Maybe that's how he knows a magician. Apparently his coolness has won over Miss Russell, who, instead of saying, "A weapon, in school – absolutely not!" says in a voice a bit like the Queen's, "Use it wisely, Callum."

During assembly Mr Rasish, our head teacher, gave out certificates. I received one for most improved recorder player and Emma was given hers for fundraising at the cake stall. Peter, a boy in our class, got his for passing his grade 6 dance. "That's so gay," sneered Eric behind me.

Suddenly there was a flash and Callum stood up, challenging Eric with his sword. He flashed it in front of his face and it glowed with the words: "What's wrong with dancing?" Eric looked round for support but everyone was looking at Callum, the coolest kid in the class. He turned the sword and flashed it closer to Eric's face. Sasha – my friend who is very dramatic – squealed and said he was going to slash out Eric's eyes. The sword now glowed with the words, "Why did you say it was so gay?" It turned, and it said, "What's wrong with being gay?" Eric was slain, in that he shut up and looked as pathetic as he sounded.



Callum – I'll call him Sir Callum now – put the sword back in its sheath and went to class as if nothing had happened. We were working on computers, inventing games, and Zac, the smallest boy in our class, said he'd partner me. We decided to invent a game using sharks and he found a sea image online and made it our background. Then we started to create little shark cartoons. "That's so clever," I said. "It's easy really," said Zac. "Let me show you what I learned on my computer at home."



"It's easy really," mimicked a mocking voice behind us. "Let me show you how to be queer..." Ronnie and Adam – typical.

In a flash, Callum was up, sword in the air, standing in front of Ronnie and Adam. "Why are you laughing at Zac for being good at computers?" he said.

"Well it's such a gay thing to do," moaned Ronnie in a sneery voice. "And helping a girl..."

"Did you know," said Sir Callum, "that we wouldn't have the Internet and Xbox and Minecraft if it wasn't for the people like Zac?" Ronnie's eyes searched the room for someone to back him up. Callum twisted the sword in his hand, right in front of Ronnie, and the words said: "Gay? Really?" And he turned the sword, and it said, "Don't you know any other words, dork?" And Ronnie was speechless, and everyone cheered.

And so the day went on, Callum defeating the boys from Year 8 who said Finn was 'a big girl' for not wanting to play football at lunchtime (Callum not only used the sword, he started a game of slay dragons, making me and Zac team captains, which was so



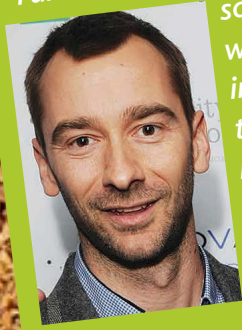
much fun), and completely crushing Eric again when he said Callum was being gay for pretending to be a prince. This time the sword flashed the words, "Is it so bad to be gay?" which threw everyone a bit...and then when he turned the sword it said, "Who are you really laughing at?" which threw Eric completely. Just before the bell went in the afternoon Miss Russell asked Callum to give her the sword and asked him which beasts he'd managed to defeat that day. "Just the uncool ones," he said, smirking, and I noticed Eric and Ronnie and Adam went bright red.

Miss Russell said the sword was in the school that day to help us celebrate difference and to slay those – or at least teach them – why it mattered. She then pointed out that there was something different about us all and asked us to write down what our difference was. Everyone found at least one. Then she told us we needed to congratulate Callum because his dad got married to his partner Tony that weekend, hence the big party. "You mean your dad's gay?" said Ronnie before he could stop himself. "Yes," said Callum. "He loves Tony and so it's kind of like having two dads. I live with my mum but stay with dad every weekend. You should come round and hang out some time Ronnie." Everyone held their breath, waiting for the sword... But Callum's words had already defeated Ronnie's and the battle was over.

By Sonan x



Charlie Condou, actor and Patron of Diversity Role Models



"I am so glad to support the work Diversity Role Models is doing in schools. As a parent, and a gay parent, I feel it is wonderful to be able to give children in schools the important message that everyone is different, and that it is okay to be different. To not only help them recognise bullying is wrong – most children we meet know that. But to help them see that not accepting and respecting people's differences is also wrong, and is part of that bullying behaviour."

Information for teachers

Diversity Role Models was launched by Suran Dickson, a teacher who saw the growing rise of homophobia in schools. It struck her that none of the pupils she taught had an issue with her own sexuality and she noticed there was far less gay banter in her class. She was gay and they knew it, but they liked, trusted and respected her. She launched Diversity Role Models to introduce more children and young people to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender adults so they, too, could get to know the person behind the stereotype and become more accepting of differences, including other differences in their class.

Diversity Role Models' workshops are nothing to do with sex education. They are about relationships and acceptance of, and respect for, other people's relationships. Children are often surprised how hateful and isolating gay banter (the 'you're so gay' line) can be to children whose parents are gay, or to them if they feel they might be – or to anyone when the term is used to mock them. Children soon realise how what's often thought harmless, is actually working to effectively promote discrimination. It does this by suggesting gay is rubbish or weird or unacceptable.

When workshops encourage children to think about the impact of banter, nearly all commit to not using the term 'gay' in a negative way again.

Diversity Role Models can support your school in establishing an embedded diversity programme across the curriculum and can also help create a specific policy tackling homophobic bullying. They know a lot of LGBT bullying develops from established gender stereotypes. So often, for example, boys who don't like football or other sports but who like to dance or who like fashion are bullied as a result. The same happens to girls if, for example, they like football and don't like make-up. The charity also know – they see it every day – that children, when given the tools and the opportunity, can be the greatest ambassadors for respect and equality, even if the issue (race, disability, gender) doesn't affect them personally. Children readily recognise when this subject is aired and discussed that homophobia isn't just an issue about gay people and tackling it isn't just for their sake. This is about simply accepting and respecting everybody in the classroom, whatever their differences. This is about creating a happier class.



Celebrating difference: class-based workshops encourage students to accept and respect everyone in the school.



Diversity Role Models
in partnership with RBS

If you'd like to have a Diversity Role Model visit your school, or find out more about their teacher training packages visit www.diversityrolemodels.org