

## **Nurseries urged to teach about same-sex relationships**

**By Debbie Andalo**

**July 24, 2006**

**From EducationGuardian.co.uk**

**Nursery teachers should promote tolerance of same-sex partnerships and outlaw the use of offensive homophobic language in the classroom or playground, a teaching union said today.**

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) said the introduction of civil partnerships last year created an ideal climate for nursery schools to tackle the issue of same-sex relationships and homophobia. Many gay parents of nursery school children are reluctant to "come out" for fear that their children might become the target of homophobic bullying, said the union. Young boys at primary school are also bullied and called "gay" if they do not conform to perceived male stereotypes - reflecting the union's belief that homophobic prejudice should be addressed at an early age when children are in nursery school.

The NUT said: "It is particularly important to begin to make three to five-year-olds aware of the range of families that exist in the UK today". That would include families with single parents or those with "two mums" or "two dads", the union said. The union added: "There will be parents who are gay or lesbian who will want to be reassured that their children will be safe in the setting."

The comments by the NUT come in an annex in its response to the government's consultation document on the Early Years Foundation Stage - the guidance that the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) produces for nursery and early years staff on delivering play-based activities for children aged up to four. The guidance, which has so far been voluntary, is due to become compulsory for early years staff from next year, following the outcome of the consultation.

A spokesman for the DfES said the Early Years Foundation Stage consultation document promotes a broad "tolerance of other views" and is not specific about same-sex relationships. He said: "The framework encourages tolerances of other views which is much broader than the comments from the NUT. It doesn't mention same-sex families but encourages the development of understanding and tolerance of other people regardless of their background or culture." He refused to say whether the final guidance would be more specific about gay families and would only confirm that the framework is subject to consultation.