

## Review of the book *Pride & Progress: Making Schools LGBT+ Inclusive Spaces*, by Adam Brett and Jo Brassington

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“Picture a school”, *Pride & Progress* begins, before asking the reader to “picture this time a school which is an LGBT+ inclusive space”. This, then, is the aim Brett and Brassington set forth for their book: asking their readers how we can reimagine school spaces to be LGBT+ inclusive, and what this may mean across the school system. Throughout this book, Brett and Brassington ask the reader to be “comfortable feeling uncomfortable”, recognising the barriers – both systemic and individual – to creating inclusive spaces, and how these can be overcome.

The book starts by setting the scene; recognising why schools have not traditionally been recognised as inclusive spaces for LGBT+ youth (and teachers, including the lasting impact of Section 28 – legislation that prevented schools from discussing, or ‘promoting’ LGBT+ identities), as well as the current cis- and heteronormativity within education and beyond. Each chapter then explores a different way LGBT+ identity can be acknowledged and supported within the school system.

At times, some of these chapters appeared rather stand-alone and not-quite-connected to the chapter before (e.g. moving from intersectionality to leadership to identity), though together, the book offers a well-considered, holistic approach to the topic.

I especially appreciated the chapter of the book exploring Language. The authors recognise how language is power, and in this chapter Brett and Brassington recognise how language can be used to both create a sense of powerlessness within the LGBT+ community – including a very informative note around microaggressions and how these can be expressed within a school system – but also how language can offer power, reinforce identity and create an inclusive, reflective space for children and young people to explore and understand different aspects of identity.

This is a particularly easy book to read and engage with. Brett and Brassington write in a friendly and easy tone, so the book never feels like a lecture, but rather an ongoing back-and-forth discussion. Each chapter offers an outline of the subject, before diving into what this looks like in practice in schools, and ending with actions readers can do to challenge their own thinking. All the while, Brett and Brassington weave in conversations and ideas from those

they have interviewed on their podcast, *Pride & Progress*, on which this book is based. This set-up ensures that reading the book is an interactive and meaningful process, with the reader being challenged to consider what they’re reading, whilst they’re reading it, and what exactly it means for them in the future.

*Pride & Progress* is targeted to school-based practitioners, especially teachers and other educators. However, I feel it is an important book for everyone working with children and young people who may be exploring their identity. As educational psychologists, we are aware of the impact the denial or erasure of identity may have for young people, and what the impact can be when our identities are recognised, accepted and celebrated. There is a wealth of literature available on the negative school experiences of LGBT+ young people, and the potential impact this can have on a young person’s future outcomes. However, this book adds to a small but growing body of literature trying to highlight what can happen when schools are inclusive spaces and how we can support schools to be more inclusive. As national discourses around identity and education grow – especially for trans young people – educational psychologists are well-placed to provide ongoing support to young people and schools at the individual, family, and system level, in order to ensure that all LGBT+ young people feel heard and recognised, and this book offers a wealth of information and ideas to support them with this.



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