



Gender Questioning Policy:

Policy Lead:	Mrs Darling
Last Review Date:	December 2025
Next review date:	December 2026
Approval needed by:	Local Governing Board

This policy has been suspended whilst schools await guidance from the DFE. The consultation for this process closed in March 2024.

This is the guidance that Congleton High School will follow until further notice by the DFE

[Gender Questioning Children - non-statutory guidance](#)

The following information is provided by The Key for School Leaders

Understand your legal requirements

While there's a lot you can do to support pupils in your school who are trans, non-binary or questioning their gender, you need to be aware of your legal requirements and how they affect what you can offer.

We refer to a few pieces of legislation, guidance, and legal rulings in this article, including:

- The [UK Supreme Court ruling on the definition of a woman](#)
 - This states that 'woman' and 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 refer to a 'biological woman' (someone of the female sex at birth) and 'biological sex' (the sex of a person at birth)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
 - This states that schools have must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of a person's "gender reassignment" (which includes anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process, or part of a process, of reassigning their sex)
- The DfE's [relationships, sex education \(RSE\) and health education guidance](#)
 - This states that schools should be mindful to avoid any suggestion that social transition is a simple solution to feelings of distress or discomfort (paragraph 70)
 - While this guidance doesn't come into effect until September 2026, you can start following it now if you wish
- The [Cass Review's final report](#) – note: this is not statutory guidance for schools
 - This recommends that a medical pathway may not be the best way for most young people to manage gender-related distress (see page 30 of the report), and that parents should be actively involved in decision-making, unless there are strong grounds to believe this may put the pupil at risk (see page 164)

Identifying a pupil who may be struggling with their gender identity

Pupils who are trans, non-binary or questioning their gender might not be forthcoming about their feelings. However, you might suspect they're struggling because they:

- Are in clear distress during certain activities, such as getting ready for PE, using the toilets, or other things that might prompt feelings of discomfort around being identified as a certain gender (e.g. activities which group them specifically with boys or girls)
- Have told some of their friends, and you might hear about it from them (depending on their age, friends or other pupils might have learned about it on social media)

It's important not to jump to conclusions or assume that the pupil is trans, non-binary or questioning their gender. For example, a pupil painting their nails or cutting their hair doesn't necessarily mean they're trans, non-binary or questioning their gender – they might just be experimenting with their appearance.

If you have concerns about the pupil, you should speak to your DSL. Being trans or non-binary isn't a safeguarding issue in itself, but the DSL will be able to help you approach the pupil – especially if they're showing signs of distress.

If you decide to approach the pupil, try to create a safe space where you can gently ask them if there's anything they're worried about, or anything they'd like to tell you. During the conversation, make sure you don't accidentally:

- Put words in their mouth – let them describe their feelings to you first
- Put any pressure on them – it's their choice if they want to speak to you about it or not

Before you approach the pupil, it's worth getting up to speed on the main terminology surrounding trans identity – though you don't necessarily need to use these when speaking to the pupil (and the pupil might not use this language themselves).

Terminology

Responding to a pupil who tells you they're trans, non-binary or questioning their gender

Depending on the pupil's age, development stage and communication level, they might not have the language to describe exactly how they're feeling.

They may also be confused about their feelings and identity, and might not have all of the answers for you.

Remember also that pupils vary a lot in how confident and comfortable they are in talking about how they feel and their identity. There's no universal experience here, and each pupil will be different.

Listen to the pupil

If a pupil tells you they feel that they may have a different gender identity from their sex assigned at birth, or are otherwise questioning their gender identity, you should:

- Listen calmly
- Ask them how you can help (for ideas on what you can suggest, see our section below on making changes to support the pupil)
- Stay 'matter of fact' where possible
- Ask questions sensitively and avoid leading questions
- Ask the pupil who else they've told / who else knows (if anyone)
 - This will help you understand who the pupil feels comfortable talking to about their experience, to know who you can talk to, and to get a sense of the pupil's support network
- Ask the pupil how they want to be referred to at school (they might not know at this time)
- Don't promise confidentiality, but explain that you'll only speak to people who can help them be safe (e.g. your DSL)

You can use our discussion guide to help you navigate the conversation.

[KeyDoc: questions to ask a pupil who is trans, non-binary or questioning their gender](#)DOCX, 129.4 KBDownload

What should I do if a pupil with SEND tells me they're trans, non-binary or questioning their gender?

Pupils with SEND are just as likely to question their gender as anyone else. Having additional needs doesn't affect the validity of these pupils' feelings about their own gender.

They may need extra support when speaking to you and exploring their gender identity, especially if they have communication and interaction difficulties.

In this situation, you should speak to your special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) to figure out next steps. This might include adapting materials on the subject to make them accessible, or providing 1-on-1 support.

This section is based on [guidance from Stonewall](#).

Do I need to alert our DSL?

A pupil being trans, non-binary or questioning their gender isn't a safeguarding concern in itself. You don't need to tell your DSL.

However, trans pupils, non-binary pupils and pupils questioning their gender may be struggling with mental health for various reasons (including bullying, or worries about their identity and feelings), which is something to bear in mind when speaking with them.

If you think a pupil is struggling with their mental health, or if you have any other safeguarding concerns, report it to your DSL.

Do I need to tell the parents/carers?

When you're supporting a pupil who is trans, non-binary or questioning their gender, you should consider the broad range of the pupil's needs in partnership with their parents or carers.

The only time you shouldn't do this is in the 'exceptionally rare circumstances' where involving the parents/carers would create a significant risk of harm to the child. You can find this on page 56 of [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE).

For more on talking to the pupil's parents or carers, see the section on this below.

Ask the pupil about what they need from you

Every pupil's experience will be different, so there's no single approach to supporting them. You can start by identifying what point the pupil is at in questioning their gender and/or transitioning. For example, it may be that:

- The pupil is having complicated feelings about their gender identity, but doesn't know what they need at this time
- The pupil has a sense of their feelings and knows what they want, which may include some elements of social transition
- The pupil has already started to socially transition, but needs some help from the school with this (such as in asking the school community to use their preferred name and pronouns)
- The pupil has started to socially transition, and is exploring medical transition for later in life
- The pupil is seeking medical intervention as soon as possible (this might be the case if they're in the early stages of puberty, and want to medically transition before they reach adolescence)

Ask the pupil what they would like to happen at this stage, and what support they need from you.

Give pupils time to make decisions, and take things at their pace. Some pupils may be coming to you early in their journey, and they might not know what they want or need – keep the door open for them to return to you.

Manage the pupil's expectations

You'll need to explain to the pupil that there are some things you won't be able to do, but that you'll do what you can to support them.

For your legal responsibilities and links to guidance, see the first section of this article.

For information about different specific areas (such as the use of toilets and changing spaces, and completing the school census), see the section below on making changes to support the pupil.

Make changes to support the pupil

Some pupils might not feel ready for anything to change at school – let them take their time to decide what, if anything, they want to happen. Try to check in with them regularly to stay up to date on their wishes and needs, and remind them that they can come to you at any time.

Other pupils might be ready to make changes, and these could give them space to explore their feelings as well as make them feel more accepted and validated.

Toilets and changing rooms

The UK Supreme Court's ruling in April 2025 likely has an impact on the toilets and changing rooms trans pupils can use. We're waiting on further guidance from the DfE, as well as the EHRC.

The EHRC has withdrawn its previous interim guidance, and recommends schools seek specialist legal advice on their duties in this area. You can find out more on the [EHRC's website](#).

We'll update this article when we know more – select 'save for later' at the top of the page to be notified when we do.

Names and pronouns

It's important use the pupil's preferred name and pronouns. For example, a pupil might prefer you to call them by their birth name in front of their peers and friends if they're not ready to come out to them.

For pupils who are unsure about how they want to be referred to, this is something you can ask when you check in with them. Stay up to date on how they would like to be referred to because this can help to:

- Support and validate their identity
- Maintain their confidentiality
- Keep them safe ('outing' them could be unsafe and/or affect their mental health)

You don't need to get parents'/carers' permission to use a pupil's preferred name and pronouns. However, you should let the pupil know that by using a different name and/or pronoun at school, their parents or carers are more likely to find out about it.

For more guidance on talking to a pupil about telling their parents/carers about their gender identity, and about speaking with the parents/carers, see the section below.

Recording the pupil's name and gender

If or when a pupil is ready for you to change their name and gender on official school records and documentation, you may be able to do this in some instances. Doing so can help embed the new name and pronouns across the school.

School records:

Your school's management information system (MIS) may allow you to record a preferred name without a legal change of name. This might be a 'prefers to be known as' option. You may also be able to change the pupil's gender in the system.

Depending on your MIS, you might be able to change the settings so documents such as the register or school reports show the pupil's preferred name instead of their legal one. Contact your MIS provider if you aren't sure how to do this.

The school census:

You must record the pupil's full legal name and sex. There's no option for non-binary pupils – you must record the pupil as male or female. See the DfE's [guide to the school census](#) for more information.

Exam documentation:

For exams, the Joint Council for Qualifications' (JCQ) advises that you should enter candidates' under a name that can be verified against identification (e.g. a passport or birth certificate), except in 'exceptional circumstances'. You can find this information on page 20 of the [JCQ's 2025/26 general regulations](#).

You can let your trans pupils, non-binary pupils and pupils questioning their gender know that many exam boards will provide replacement certificates and/or statements of results if they change their legal name in future. You can find out more at:

- [AQA – Certificate changes for transgender people](#)
- [City & Guilds – Replace and amend your certificate](#)
- [Eduqas \(WJEC\) – Replacement exam certificates](#)
- [NCFE – Replacement certificates](#)
- [OCR – Gender reassignment](#)
- [Pearson \(Edexcel\) – Gender Reassignment Certificate Amendments](#)

Uniform and clothing

If the pupil wants to wear the clothing that matches their gender identity, you should allow this.

Be aware that pupils who haven't told their parents/carers about their identity may choose to attend school in clothes that match their sex assigned at birth.

If your school has a uniform that isn't gender neutral, you may want to consider changing it in future, in consultation with your school community. Your governing board should aim for your uniform policy to be as inclusive as possible, according to the [DfE's uniform guidance](#).

Wider changes you can make to support inclusion

Supporting any pupil who is trans, non-binary or questioning their gender will likely be an ongoing process, but along the way you should consider the wider changes you can make across your school:

- Consider the ways you can make your entire school more inclusive – see our [gender and LGBTQ+ inclusivity audit](#) for ideas on how to do this
- Think about how you can better incorporate LGBTQ+ topics into your curriculum, which can help pupils feel more validated and understand themselves and others better – see our guide on including [LGBTQ+ content in your curriculum](#)
- If your uniform isn't gender neutral, you may want to change it in consultation with your school community – you can use our [model policy](#) as a starting point

Speaking to the pupil's parents or carers

There's no definitive guidance on whether, when or how you should speak to the parents/carers of pupils who are trans, non-binary or questioning their gender. The DfE plans on publishing its 'gender questioning children' guidance soon – when it does so, or provides any further clarity on this, we'll update this section.

Speak to the pupil first

You might be the first adult the pupil tells about their gender identity or the fact they are questioning their gender, and they might be anxious about their parents/carers finding out.

If they haven't told their parents/carers that they are trans or non-binary or questioning their gender, it's important to understand why. Reasons could include:

- Uncertainty about their own feelings and/or identity
- Simply not feeling ready to talk to them
- Worries about family members or their community being disapproving or distressed
- Fear of abuse (such as emotional, verbal or physical abuse)
 - Pupils who are trans or non-binary might face higher levels of abuse from their family, according to a [Galop study](#)

The final report of the Cass Review recommends that parents should be actively involved in decision-making, unless there are strong grounds to believe this may put the pupil at risk (see page 164).

You and/or other members of staff might have an idea of which parents/carers are likely to be more or less accepting of the news, but it's safer not to make any assumptions.

If there is a potential risk to the pupil from their family, involve your DSL in discussions and decisions around speaking to their parents/carers.

Helping a pupil tell their parents/carers

When you discuss how to let the pupil's parents/carers know about their gender identity or the fact they are questioning their gender, ask them:

- Do you want to tell your parents/carers yourself?
 - If yes: do you want someone from the school there to support you?
 - If no: would you like someone from the school to do it?
- Do you have any worries about how your parents/carers might respond?
- What are the main things you want your parents/carers to understand?

Plan out as much of the conversation in advance with the pupil as possible, as that way you are following their lead. Use our template to gather information on how the pupil is feeling and how they would like to tell their parents/carers.

[KeyDoc: speaking to a pupil who is trans, non-binary or questioning their gender about telling their parents/carersDOCX, 128.7 KB](#) **Download**

If you or any colleagues are involved in conversations with the pupil's parents/carers, try to approach the conversation with an open mind and without making assumptions about how they might react.

How to work with resistant parents/carers

Parents/carers may be unsupportive of their child's gender identity or questioning of their gender for a number of reasons, which could include:

- Cultural or religious beliefs that are opposed to the concept of trans or non-binary identities
- Needing some time to understand their child's identity

This is a delicate issue, and not something you need to handle on your own. It's worth calling on other members of staff who are aware of the pupil's situation to help you navigate conversations with parents/carers, to make sure both the parents'/carers' and the pupil's feelings are heard.

The most important thing to get across is that the pupil is still their child, and needs their parents'/carers' love and support.

See our article on having [successful conversations with parents and carers](#). While it's not specifically about speaking to them about pupils who are trans, non-binary or questioning their gender, it does include tips on navigating difficult topics.

Supporting a pupil who wants to detransition

It's possible that a pupil will start socially transitioning, but later decide that they would like to go back to the gender that matches their sex assigned at birth.

If a pupil talks to you about this, you should ask why in a non-judgemental way. It could be because they:

- Are more comfortable with their gender matching their sex assigned at birth than before
- Have experienced some kind of bullying or harassment
- Have experienced abuse
- Have other worries about transitioning or their gender

A pupil's decision to detransition may also not be permanent. For example, they might decide that due to bullying or family pressure, they want to detransition now and transition at a later date instead.

In cases where a pupil wants to detransition, the Cass Review's final report recommends that they do this with the support and monitoring of clinical services (see page 43 of the report, [linked above](#)).