



**Shaw  
Education  
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# **Guidance for Academies on Supporting Transgender Young People**

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# 1 Introduction

This guidance is non-statutory and for the purpose of equipping academies with knowledge and guidance so that they can best support and protect children who may be questioning their identity and help them to fulfil their potential whilst in education.

It has been produced with reference to current practice and guidance on supporting transgender children including the [Equality Act 2010 \(guidance\)](#) and [Preventing & Tackling Bullying \(Dept. of Edu\)](#), Further support material is available in Annex B.

Department of Education guidance states that 'all children have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation (or gender identity)'.

It is worth noting that whilst this guidance applies to all young people, a different approach may well be recommended for younger children and children with SEND compared to adolescents. As children age, their capability to make decisions increases and the evolving capacities of the child should be a key consideration in making and reviewing decisions regarding support. In addition, for some children their gender identity can be fluid over time, even when they feel sure their identity is fixed. So regardless of the long-term outcome, the child should be supported for who they are and not necessarily who a child may become. This helps foster secure attachment and resilience.

This guidance is for all school staff, but in particular pastoral care and safeguarding teams and aims to minimise possible distress and disruption to transgender children and embed good practice across the Multi Academy Trust by:

- Promoting inclusion for all children within our schools by improving support for transgender children.
- Ensuring that all adults, especially pastoral and safeguarding teams, are able to deal with Trans matters inclusively.
- Offer some practical guidance to schools on specific issues
- Ensuring all children are valued and respected.
- Helping everyone, especially pastoral and safeguarding teams, better understand some of the barriers that can be experienced by transgender people.

Because of the varying views within and between people of different backgrounds on how to support a transgender young person, the guidance does not recommend a 'one size fits all' approach but is designed to help staff in making justifiable decisions with regard to the support of transgender children, including assessing any impact of those decisions on other children.

## 2 Transgender - defined

For the purposes of this document, 'Transgender' is a term that describes people whose gender identity or expression does not match the sex they were assigned at birth.

Most people's gender identity and expression (the gender with which they associate themselves and outwardly show their gender) will not differ from that typically associated with their assigned sex. Transgender people, however, have a gender identity/expression which differs from that of their (assigned) birth sex.

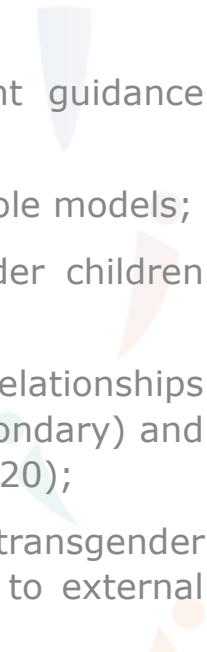
**Intersex** people are born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit typical definition of male or female and are assigned a legal gender at birth which may or may not match their gender identity as they grow up and they may wish to change gender roles later in life.

Transgender children are not all 'the same' and can refer to their identities and experiences in many ways. For example, some transgender children may refer to themselves as 'non-binary', (not exclusively male or female or somewhere in-between), while others report they feel both male and female.

## 3 Creating an inclusive environment

Department of Education guidance states that education for all children and young people should be provided in an inclusive environment that is nurtured within the whole community. Schools must create environments where children feel confident in sharing issues about their gender identity. In keeping with the ethos of the school, school leaders may consider a range of measures to implement across school to help create an environment where transgender children, alongside children of all different identities, are valued, by:

- Challenging homophobic, transphobic or any other type of bullying;

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- Using appropriate terminology and language;
  - Ensuring all staff are knowledgeable of pertinent guidance documents;
  - Tackling stereotypes and introducing transgender role models;
  - Better understanding of experiences of transgender children through interactions, confidential surveys, etc.;
  - Ensuring that transgender topics are part of the Relationships Education (Primary) and Sex Education (RSE) (Secondary) and Health Education programme (compulsory September 2020);
  - Having in place key knowledgeable staff to support transgender or gender-questioning children, including 'signposting' to external support opportunities.

## **4 Gender dysphoria**

Gender dysphoria (GD) is the distress a person feels due to a mismatch between their gender identity and their sex assigned at birth, something some transgender people experience. Transgender young people can experience rejection at some point, or at least a feeling of being rejected and this can increase gender dysphoria, which at clinical levels can result in a medical diagnosis, possibly via CAMHS, where they may have undergone an age-appropriate assessment for gender dysphoria and any coexisting mental health concerns. As a result of rejection, the young person can repress feelings which can lead to depression, isolation and a desire to leave education as early as possible.

Many transgender children experience issues and difficulties around participation in sport and school activities, the wearing of school uniforms and the use of toilet facilities. Transgender children are also more likely to experience social isolation and bullying than their peers. This poor experience at school has a knock-on effect on their mental health, attendance and ability to learn.

For prepubertal children, there is evidence to suggest that, in the majority of cases, the gender dysphoria will resolve and the child will identify with their birth-assigned sex by early adolescence. However, for a small minority of children, these feelings will intensify and body aversion will develop or increase as they become adolescents and their secondary sex characteristics develop.

## 5 Legislation

Whilst legislation demands that schools must not discriminate against a child because of their transgender status, there is no legal requirement for schools, as with disability, to make 'reasonable adjustments' for transgender children. It would be advisable however, that schools may wish to take a similar approach to ensure that the needs of transgender children are met. This guidance outlines some of the adjustments and steps that schools may wish to consider. The practicalities and arrangements for such adjustments will vary of course from school to school.

## 6 Supporting a young person with gender identity issues

If a young person makes a disclosure to a member of staff that they are questioning their gender identity or believes themselves to be transgender, staff are not expected to have all the answers or to make a judgement in relation to a young person's current or future gender identity, but simply to respect the uniqueness, individuality and needs of each child.

The following points are not intended to be a comprehensive list, but merely advice for staff responding to a young person who is questioning their gender identity, or who feels they might be transgender:

- Children will not expect you to be an expert.....don't panic;
- Understand that the child has trusted you with this so recognise this trust...maybe say 'thanks'. This may put the child (and you) at ease;
- Listen and ask what support you can give;
- Don't overly question their understanding of their gender identity or make any personal judgement statements about their gender identity;
- Don't agree to anything you're not sure of;
- Ask what name and pronoun you should use to address them (see below). Check if that's all the time or in certain circumstances;
- Ask if you can share information and with whom (let them know that you will not share their information with anyone unless they give their permission or there is a risk to themselves or others);
- Arrange a time to meet up again, to check in and see how they are doing;
- Check if there's anything else they want to talk about;

- Suggest that you arrange a time to meet with the child to discuss how they may feel better supported in school (see Plan Template Annex A). Ask the child if they want parents/carers at the meeting

## 7 Social transition

Social transition refers to the reversible process that transgender individuals take to present as the gender they most strongly identify with. This could include wearing clothes and/or using facilities which correspond to their gender identity, or any other action which identifies the person with their preferred gender identity. The child may also wish to adopt a different name to be called. Some young people socially transition as a way of alleviating gender dysphoria or exploring life in another gender role.

## 8 Confidentiality

Where a young person discloses to a member of staff about questioning their gender identity or believes themselves to be transgender, this should be treated as confidential information and should only be discussed with a parent/carer with the young person's consent (unless the staff member has legitimate cause for concern for the young person's safety as in a safeguarding disclosure). It is helpful to discuss with the young person if they have discussed this at home and what sort of support they have received from their parents and siblings.

When however, a child in school requests to 'transition', parental involvement, or at least a supportive adult from outside school, is key.

In addition, schools should not disclose confidential information relating to a child's transgender status to a third party, e.g. health or other professional, another parent etc. without the child's permission.

## 9 Practical Considerations

**Names and pronouns** – these can be agreed informally as part of a plan and communicated to all staff. SIMs/registers etc. should be altered to reflect a child's chosen name (this is not a legal change of name. For legal implications colleagues should seek further advice). For possibly very young children, it may be worth seeking medical advice to ensure the decision is in the best interests of the child's mental and emotional health. An

increasing number of young people are identifying outside the gender binary and use gender-neutral pronouns. The most common term used is 'they'/them'. Be patient that staff will take time to adjust and this should be explained to the child and potentially their parents at the support plan meeting.

**Toilets and changing rooms** – the use of toilets and changing facilities often generates strongly held views. It is important to be sensitive to their needs and also recognise the needs and sensitivities of other students. Where a transgender child feels more comfortable using a separate facility, the school should try to accommodate this as best they can. However, if a child requests to use facilities consistent with their gender identity this should be assessed on a case by case basis. Where this is considered possible, then schools should look to do so, but where a school can justify reasons not to follow the request, e.g. health and safety reasons, then that is the school's choice. As with all of the practical considerations, and more so with this issue, discussions with the child and potentially parents when devising the support plan and guidance should help to negate any potential issues.

**Uniforms, PE kit & Swimwear** – all children should be expected to follow uniform rules. Exceptions are generally considered on the grounds of religion, race or a medical condition. A similar approach is reasonable in the case of a transgender child. Children should be allowed to wear the clothing that relates to their gender identity but schools should consider the practicality of this. It may be beneficial to have a 'gender neutral option', e.g. trousers for both boys and girls. At all times the child, and potentially parents, should be involved in consultation and when writing any plan, schools should also consider all children when coming to an agreement with any one particular child.

Given the revealing nature of swimwear, there will need to be consideration of 'suitable' clothing and schools may need to consider clothing worn by transgender children when participating in swimming lesson to ensure 'modesty' and suitability.

**PE & Sports** – most schools do, at all or some point, have mixed sex classes which would not cause any issues when supporting a transgender child. There may be sports and activities when for example health and safety becomes a factor, e.g. where, as puberty develops, male to female (M2F) transgender participants may have a physical advantage over other girls but this should not present a problem within a carefully and sensitively managed lesson context. The issue of physical risk within certain sports should also be managed properly within the lesson context rather than preventing young Transgender people from participating (which would be



discriminatory). Again, discussing these issues with the child and parents and including in their support plan will resolve any anxieties. In competitive sport, staff should consider the relevant national governing body for guidance.

**Residential trips** – Sleeping arrangements should be thought out and planned before departure including suitable risk assessments if appropriate. Again, where a decision to exclude a transgender child from sharing single sex accommodation, it must be a justifiable one, e.g. health and safety reasons. Objections from other parents/children should be reasonable and not based on prejudice or transphobia. Travel to countries with differing cultural expectations will need to be taken into consideration.

## 10 Developing a support plan

When a young person requests support when questioning their gender identity or consider themselves as transgender, it is good practice to create an informal plan with the child on how they can be supported. When a child requests to transition when at school a more formalised plan is recommended, in consultation with the child and their parents (and possibly health professionals) to help clarify expectations and avoid any misunderstandings. The support plan should establish the extent of the transition (where requested) and clarify arrangements around the sharing of information and how to handle potential common challenges such as toilet use, changing etc.

A template Support Plan is included at the end of this guidance document in Annex A, which lists the areas for discussion. This meeting is to support not only the child but also the family and school in ensuring that where possible practical aspects of school life are such that the child feels supported and respected.

It is important to adopt a case by case approach as each young person may be at a different 'stage' in their gender identity and thus requests and anxieties may be different. Schools should weigh concerns they may have, for example possible health and safety implications or possible victimisation from others, against benefits for the young person, including easing any distress the child may have. Where a school makes a decision which may not comply with a young person's wishes, there must be good justifiable reasons for this decision.

## Annex A: Support Plan Template

Date of meeting:	Lead staff:	
<b>Name of child:</b>		Year Group:
Date of birth:	Gender Identity: (M/F/other)	
Have parents/carers been informed? YES / NO	Names of parents/carers if present:	
Is child engaged with any external services currently around transgender? (e.g. CAMHS) Give details		
Is child or family engaged with any other external services currently? Give details		
Does child have any siblings at school? (If yes state names and year groups)		
<b>Name/pronoun Change</b>		
Is a name/pronoun change being requested?  YES / NO	Preferred name:  From (date):	Preferred pronoun:  From (date):
<b>Agreed Plans for toilets</b>		
Briefly outline agreed arrangements for use of toilets in school:          From (date):		
<b>Agreed Plans for Changing</b>		

Briefly outline agreed arrangements for changing for PE/Sports etc.:

From (date):

**Agreed Plans for Residential trips**

Briefly outline agreed arrangements for residential trips, i.e. sleeping arrangements etc.:

From (date):

**Agreed Plans for gendered activities** (e.g. PE lessons/sports clubs):

Briefly outline agreed arrangements for school activities:

From (date):

**Agreed Plans for communication with other children/staff/wider school community:**

Briefly outline how others will be informed:

From (date):

**Additional support/arrangements:**

List below any other support/arrangements which have been agreed including support from internal and external means:

From (date):

Date for next review/planning meeting:

For office use only:

Next steps for lead staff:

Implications for further staff training:

Implications for education to be included in whole school curriculum:

Notes:

## **Annex B: Useful Guidance Documents**

Colleagues may find these useful for reference for further reading and/or to shape more bespoke plans for supporting young people. Also included are relevant legal acts which are relevant. (There are many more online support sites for children and adults)

[Trans Inclusion Schools Toolkit](#) From Brighton and Hove City Council and the Allsorts Youth Project. "This is one of the best and most comprehensive guidance documents available in the UK."

[Gender Identity Research and Education Society \(Resources\)](#) The Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) have produced some helpful training tools which can be used in school.

[NHS Support](#) "If your child seems confused about their gender, it's usual for parents to feel puzzled or worried. But there is help available to support you and your child."

[Transunite](#) "TransUnite is a comprehensive resource for people in the UK searching for support in the transgender community. Our easy to use, mobile friendly directory connects you to an established network of trans support groups near you."

[Youngminds](#) "If your child is struggling with their gender or thinks they are transgender, here is our advice and information on what you can do and where you can get help."

[Northern Ireland Education Board - supporting young people](#) "This guidance aims to support schools and other educational settings to develop and sustain effective pastoral care systems which can accommodate and develop the social, emotional, educational, physical and spiritual needs of all children within the school ethos."

[Data Protection Act 1998 Equality Act 2010 \(Guidance\)](#)

[Gender Recognition Act 2004 \(Gender Recognition Consultation \(2018\)\)](#)  
[Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[Sex Discrimination \(Gender Reassignment\) Regulations 1999](#)

[Supporting LGBT Young People - Stonewall](#)

## **Annex C: ‘Top Ten tips supporting LGBT Young People’ (Stonewall)**

### **DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS**

Don't make assumptions about who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. Let a young person use the words of their choice to describe their sexual orientation or gender identity and remember that every young person will express who they are in their own way.

### **LISTEN AND BE POSITIVE**

Be positive when a young person comes out as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. Listen, offer reassurance and talk to them about how they'd like to proceed.

### **WORK WITH PARENTS/CARERS**

Make sure all parents/carers know that lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans issues are covered in school. Don't discuss a young person's sexual orientation or gender identity with parents/carers without the young person's permission. Work with supportive parents/carers to ensure the best support for a young person and know where to signpost should parents/carers want information, advice or support.

### **TACKLE BULLYING AND CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES**

Take a whole-school approach to tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and language and challenge gender stereotypes from an early age.

### **SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE TO FIND A YOUTH GROUP**

Use Stonewall's What's In my area? database and Info Service to find out what's running in the local community and support students to set up diversity or peer support groups in school.

### **PROVIDE ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND INFORMATION**

Provide lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people with relevant information and resources so they are able to make safe choices. Make information available around the school and provide links to accurate information online.

### **HELP LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANS YOUNG PEOPLE TO STAY SAFE**

Help young people stay safe online and when out and about. Make sure young people know their rights and how to report discrimination. Ensure young people know how they can access counselling and mental health services.

### **INCREASE VISIBILITY**

Make sure lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people and experiences are reflected in the curriculum, including in Sex and Relationships Education. Ensure the library contains a range of books with lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans characters and different families and celebrate special events such as LGBT History Month.

### **EQUIP STAFF TO STEP UP**

Help all staff act as role models to young people by equipping them to talk about issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people and to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

### **WORK TOGETHER**

Work collaboratively with local authorities, schools, youth services and other organisations to provide the best support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people.



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