



## Supporting Gender Diverse Pupils in Primary School – Frequently Asked Questions

### What should I do if I think a pupil is questioning their gender identity?

- Ensure pupils know that they can come to you and discuss any issues in their own time. Be open, honest and approachable.
- It is important to remember that children's gender identity goes through a process of change as they age. Between ages 4 and 5 most children begin to develop a stable sense of their gender identity. Many children explore their gender identity as they develop; young girls may prefer more traditionally "masculine" items, including toys and clothes whilst young boys may favour more traditionally "feminine" interests and/or items.
- Sometimes a young child who strongly identifies with another gender may revert to the gender they were assigned at birth - the most common time for this to occur is about 9 or 10 years old.
- It is important to allow children the freedom to explore their gender identity at their own pace without labelling them as gender diverse or transgender.
- It is important to create an environment where pupils feel as though they can be themselves and speak to their teachers about any issues they may be facing.
- Teachers can help to create a welcoming and supportive environment for gender diverse or transgender pupils by avoiding activities that separate their class by gender, addressing any instances of LGBT bullying proactively and sharing in discussion that challenges traditional gender roles.

### What should I do if a pupil tells me they are gender diverse?

- If a pupil confides in you that they think they are/may be gender diverse or transgender, the first and most important thing to do is reassure them that this is okay.
- Provide reassurance that gender questioning can take time and that there is no rush to decide a particular label or identity. They may want to take time to explore their gender identity before making any decisions about labels, pronouns or names. The young person's thoughts and feelings at that time should be respected, and also the young person reassured that these may change over time.
- Ask the pupil questions about what support they would like from school to make them feel comfortable.
- Ask the pupil who they have told about their feelings and how they would feel about discussing their feelings with parents if they haven't already. Be mindful to ask the pupil what they would want to say in this instance and what support they need to have this conversation. Let them know that you can help them share their feelings with parents if that is what they would like.
- The pupil may decide that they would like to undergo social transition (i.e. to begin living as the gender they most strongly identify with) whilst they are at school. If this is the case, discussion should be held between the child's parents, teacher and members of the school's senior



management to agree a plan for how to take this forward. However this is their choice and may take time before they reach this conclusion. When a pupil first comes to you, they may just want to speak to someone about how they feel. Be open, attentive and listen to what they have to say.

- If a pupil does decide that they would like to begin their transition whilst at school, steps should be taken to ensure that they are central to any, and all, discussions regarding this.
- The pupil may wish to be known by a different name and pronoun, cut or grow their hair and begin dressing as the gender they most identify with.
- Some pupils may wish to “come out” publicly to their class/school whilst others may not feel comfortable sharing their gender identity with others. By listening to the needs and wants of the pupil the school can support them most effectively.
- Alternatively, a pupil might decide against transitioning whilst at school for whatever reason. This is the choice of the young person and should be respected.
- Any actions around a child or young person who decides to transition whilst at school should be planned carefully in accordance with the views of the pupil and their parents, with parents and the pupil being consulted and central to discussions.
- For neurodivergent young people, particularly those with autism, there is a higher correlation with being gender diverse. Approaches such as social stories, comic strip conversations and concrete, visual tools may be helpful in planning the support around the young person.

### **Who should I tell?**

- A child identifying as gender diverse or transgender is not a child protection issue in itself, therefore it is important to request the pupil’s consent before passing this information on.
- However, where there are additional concerns regarding the pupil’s mental health and/or wellbeing it may be appropriate to consider additional support planning with the young person and their parent.
- A gender diverse or transgender pupil may request your support in informing other people about their gender identity. This could include parents, friends, classmates or other teachers. In this instance, these conversations should be led by the young person and their views should be gathered and listened to.

### **How do I talk about this with other pupils?**

- If a gender diverse or transgender pupil wishes to disclose their gender identity to other pupils and requests your support to do so, it is important to plan for this accordingly and to actively seek the views of the pupil and their parents.
- It is important for school staff to actively counteract any negative attitudes expressed towards gender diverse or transgender pupils. If a pupil makes a remark that is transphobic, it is appropriate to respond with the following questioning responses: “*What do you think that word means?*” “*How would you feel if someone spoke to you in that way?*” or alternatively “*Do you realise that what you have said is an insult? How do you think that would make someone feel?*”

- If you are working with children who have a level of understanding around what it means to be gender diverse or transgender you could also respond to a transphobic remark with the following: *“I am surprised and disappointed to hear you say that. I would have hoped that you would know that it is important to treat everyone, including gender diverse or transgender people, with respect and therefore it is wrong to use that kind of language.”*

### **Is it just a phase?**

- Some adults may be concerned that a pupil is too young to make a decision regarding their gender identity.
- Dismissing a pupil’s identity as “just a phase” can be harmful, and may knock the pupil’s confidence in coming to you for support. It is important to allow a pupil to explore their gender identity at their own pace, and not to make assumptions.

### **What if the child’s parents are not supportive?**

- Some parents may find it difficult or upsetting to find out that their child is gender diverse or transgender. If parents are struggling to accept that their child is gender diverse or transgender, it is important to protect the best interests of the pupil and to support the pupil to feel safe and comfortable to be themselves within school.
- If there are concerns regarding the child’s well-being as a result of a conflict with home, these should be discussed with parents.

### **What should I say to other parents?**

- Confidential information about an individual pupil must not be shared with other parents. A statement such as the following ought to be used in instances relating to issues surrounding gender diverse or transgender pupils:
- *“This issue concerns the personal circumstances of a child, and as such we are unable to comment on this individual case. Our school is committed to working with families and relevant agencies/partners to ensure that we meet the needs of all pupils and provide a supportive environment for children to learn and achieve their academic potential.”*
- What you can do is let parents know that they can discuss any worries or concerns with you, and if they have any concerns about their own children you can support them and plan proactively around this.
- However, if the pupil and pupil’s parents are happy for the school to share information it is good practice to consult with the pupil and parents’ regarding what information they would like shared with others and how this should be worded.