



Policy on Gender-Questioning Children

(INCLUDING BOARDING, DAY AND EYFS PUPILS)

Policy Statement

Mowden Hall School is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all pupils. We recognise that some children may question their gender identity and that such matters must be handled with sensitivity, safeguarding awareness, and in partnership with parents. This policy sets out how the School will support gender-questioning pupils in line with statutory duties, Department for Education guidance, and our values of respect, care, and inclusion.

Aims

- To ensure all pupils feel respected, safe, and supported.
- To provide staff with clear guidelines on managing requests from gender-questioning children.
- To uphold the School's safeguarding duties, prioritising the welfare of the child.
- To maintain open communication with parents and carers.
- To ensure decisions are consistent with the developmental stage of the child and with legal guidance.

Principles

- The School will always act in the best interests of the child.
- Parents will be involved in discussions from the outset unless there are exceptional safeguarding reasons not to.
- Any support offered will be proportionate to the age and stage of the child.
- The School will distinguish between social transition requests (e.g. name, pronoun, uniform) and wider pastoral support.
- The School will maintain a neutral stance, supporting the child pastorally without making assumptions or medical judgments.

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Relevant Guidance and Legal Framework

A. Department for Education Draft Guidance: 'Gender Questioning Children' (2023)

- Schools must safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.
- Bullying and harassment must never be tolerated.
- Parents should not be excluded from decisions about social transition unless there are exceptional safeguarding concerns.
- There is no general duty to facilitate social transition; each case must be considered individually.
- Pupils must be registered by their legal name and biological sex.
- Use of toilets, changing facilities, and boarding accommodation will normally be based on biological sex, though reasonable pastoral adjustments may be made.
- Competitive sports should take account of biological sex for safety and fairness.
- School uniform standards should normally align with biological sex.

B. Equality Act 2010

- Pupils are protected from discrimination, harassment, or victimisation on the basis of sex or gender reassignment.
- Schools must ensure equal access to education and facilities unless there is a lawful justification for differential treatment.
- Policies (e.g. uniform, sports) must not indirectly discriminate unless objectively justified.

C. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Staff must record and report safeguarding concerns to the DSL.
- Confidentiality cannot be promised if a child makes a disclosure; parents will normally be informed.
- Schools must ensure that any child experiencing distress is supported through pastoral systems and, where appropriate, signposted to professional services.

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Roles and Responsibilities

- Headteacher: ultimate responsibility for decisions regarding requests from gender-questioning pupils.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): ensures safeguarding considerations are central.
- Form Tutors / Class Teachers: provide day-to-day pastoral support and raise concerns promptly.
- Parents / Carers: partners in decision-making, kept fully informed.

Guidelines for Staff

6.1 Initial Disclosure

- Listen with empathy and respect.
- Do not promise confidentiality; explain that parents will be informed.
- Refer the matter immediately to the Headteacher and DSL.

6.2 Parental Involvement

- Parents will be informed at an early stage.
- Decisions will be made collaboratively between the School, the child, and the parents.

6.3 Names and Pronouns

- Pupils will be recorded under their legal name.
- Requests for a preferred name or pronoun will be carefully considered with parents and in line with DfE guidance.
- Staff are not required to use pronouns that differ from biological sex but must always treat pupils with dignity and respect.

6.4 Uniform and Sports

- Uniform will normally be worn according to biological sex.
- For sports, participation will be based on biological sex to ensure safety and fairness, though inclusive opportunities will be sought where appropriate.

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6.5 Facilities

- Toilets, changing rooms, and boarding accommodation will normally be allocated according to biological sex.
- Private changing arrangements may be offered as a reasonable adjustment.

6.6 Curriculum and PSHE

- Teaching will promote respect and kindness, in line with statutory RSHE requirements.
- Gender identity may be discussed in an age-appropriate, balanced, and sensitive manner.

6.7 Safeguarding

- Any concerns about mental health, self-harm, or welfare will be referred to the DSL.
- The School may signpost to external support (e.g. counselling, health services) as appropriate.

Training and Awareness

- All staff will receive annual training on this policy, safeguarding, and respectful communication.
- Policy will be reviewed regularly in light of updated government guidance and legal obligations.

Monitoring and Review

- Reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body.
- Records of requests and decisions will be maintained for consistency, fairness, and accountability.

Note: This policy reflects the DfE's draft guidance (2023) which remains under consultation, alongside statutory duties in the Equality Act 2010 and KCSIE. It will be updated in line with any confirmed statutory guidance.