



THE BUCHAN SCHOOL



KING WILLIAM'S COLLEGE

King William's College, The Buchan School & The Buchan Nursery

Gender Questioning Children Policy

Issue date: 01/24

Next Review: 01/27

Stuart Corrie (Deputy Head Pastoral)

1. Introduction

King William's College and The Buchan School (the 'School') believe that school should be a safe space and that the pupils should be given the knowledge, skills and opportunities to succeed in life. Across the British Isles, there has been an increase in the number of children questioning their gender identity, which can be a highly sensitive, daunting and complex concern for pupils, parents and staff. This may lead to a request for social transitioning where pupils may wish to change their names, uniforms or use different facilities. The UK government guidance on gender questioning children (https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender-questioning-children-proposed-guidance/supporting_documents/Gender%20Questioning%20Children%20%20nonstatutory%20guidance.pdf) suggests five general principles:

- **Schools have statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.** They should consider how best to fulfil that duty towards the child who is making such a request and their peers, ensuring that any agreed course of action is in all of their best interests. This may or may not be the same as a child's wishes. Knowing a child's sex is critical to the Schools' safeguarding duties.
- **Schools should be respectful and tolerant places where bullying is never tolerated.** Staff and children should treat each other with compassion and consideration, in accordance with the ethos of the School.
- **Parents should not be excluded from decisions taken by a school relating to requests for a child to 'socially transition'.** Where a child requests action from a school in relation to any degree of social transition, schools should engage parents as a matter of priority, and encourage the child to speak to their parents, other than in the exceptionally rare circumstances where involving parents would constitute a significant risk of harm to the child.
- **Schools have specific legal duties that are framed by a child's biological sex.** While legislation exists that allows adults to go through a process to change their legal sex, children's legal sex is always the same as their biological sex.
- **There is no general duty to allow a child to 'social transition'.** The Cass Review's interim report (<https://cass.independent-review.uk/publications/interim-report/>) is clear that social transition is not a neutral act, and that better information is needed about the outcomes for children who undertake degrees of social transition. If a school decides to accommodate a request, a cautious approach should be taken that complies with legal duties. Some forms of social transition will not be compatible with schools' statutory responsibilities.

Each request will be dealt with on an individual basis with the safety and respect of the individual pupil being at the centre of any decision making. The School will treat each pupil fairly whilst complying with the legal obligations.

2. Language and Terminology

Gender identity: is a contested belief. It is a sense a person may have of their own gender, whether male, female or another category such as non-binary. This may or may not be the same as their biological sex. Many people do not consider that they or others have a gender identity at all.

Gender questioning: is a broad term that might describe children and young people who are asking questions about their biological sex and perceived gender identity.

Gender distressed or confused: is a way of describing distress or confusion that may arise from a broad range of experiences connected to a child's understanding of their biological sex and associated attributes and behaviours, but where a formal diagnosis of gender dysphoria has not been made.

Social transition: is a term often used to refer to a process by which people change their name, pronouns, clothing, or use different facilities from those provided for their biological sex. Not all people who go through this process will do so in the same way. Not all requests made to schools or colleges will comply with legal duties to safeguard children. Social transitioning is not a neutral act, as it has been recognised that it can have formative effects on a child's future development.

Gender incongruence: is a medical diagnostic term for a marked and persistent incongruence between an individual's experienced gender identity and their biological sex.

Gender dysphoria: is a similar diagnostic term to describe gender incongruence of at least 6 months' duration, which is manifested by a number of criteria. The condition is associated with clinically significant distress or impairment in social or other important areas of functioning.

3. Responding to Requests and Engaging Parents

The School will not proactively initiate action towards a pupil's social transition. Action will only be considered after a specific request from a pupil and the steps below have been followed. If a pupil discloses that they are questioning their gender but are not requesting a change, staff should listen respectfully without automatically contacting parents, but must never promise confidentiality as there may be safeguarding concerns raised.

- a) Allow for watchful waiting to ensure that the request is sustained and properly thought through. This period may help ensure that unnecessary action is not taken.
- b) Make parents aware of the situation and signpost help outside the school environment if they request more information. It is best to encourage the pupil to have the conversation with the parents themselves, and it may be that the School helps to facilitate that conversation at the request of the pupil. If there is a significant risk of harm to the pupil, it may not be appropriate to contact the parents.

The following contacts may be helpful:

Advice for parents:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/gender-identity/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/gender-identity/>

<https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/feelings-behaviour/talking-about-feelings/how-can-i-support-child-with-gender-identity/>

Advice for pupils:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/trans-teenager/>

<https://www.tht.org.uk/hiv-and-sexual-health/sexual-health/trans-people/resources>

<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/young-people/>

- c) After a period of watchful waiting, the following will be considered:
 - i. Safeguarding obligations – the best interests of the pupil will be considered, though this may not be the same as the pupil's wishes.
 - ii. Parental view – The School expects parental consent to be required in the vast majority of cases.
 - iii. The age of the pupil – requests from younger pupils will be treated with greater caution due to the possibility of a less mature understanding of complicated issues. The School would not normally accept requests for social transition from a Buchan School pupil.
 - iv. Any relevant clinical information – if a pupil or their parents are willing to share medical advice, this will be factored into any decision making.
 - v. The seriousness and context of the request
 - 1. Have previous requests been made?
 - 2. Has the pupil been unduly influenced by peers or social media?
 - 3. Does the pupil feel pressured to identify differently because they do not fit into traditional stereotypes associated with their sex?
 - 4. Has the SENCO been asked for input if appropriate?
 - 5. Is the pupil questioning their gender or their sexual orientation?
 - vi. The long and short-term impact on the pupil.
 - vii. The impact on other pupils

Any changes of names or pronouns will be communicated to staff and other pupils where it is necessary and proportionate to do so. It must be remembered that other pupils, parents or staff may hold religious or other beliefs that conflict with any decision made by the School. All members of the King William's College community are respected, and it is expected that any decisions made by the pupil, parents and School will be professionally adhered to, even if they are not personally agreed with.

4. Handling different information and requests

- a. Registration of name and sex
 - i. The admissions register must record the name, date of birth and sex of every pupil
 - ii. Data will be stored in accordance with GDPR.
 - iii. The School will make sure that relevant staff are aware of a gender questioning child.
- b. Changing names
 - i. The pupil's legal name will be recorded in the admissions register.
 - ii. Pupil's may change their 'known as' name in consultation with their parents and the School.
- c. Pronouns
 - i. Pupils at the Buchan School should not have different pronouns to their sex-based pronouns used about them.
 - ii. Pronouns will only be changed after consultation with parents.
 - iii. No member of staff or pupil will be compelled to use those pronouns and staff will not be prevented from using collective terms such as 'girls' and 'boys'.

- iv. Bullying of any pupil will not be tolerated, though no pupil will be sanctioned for making an honest mistake.

5. Single-sex spaces

- a. Toilets, showers and changing rooms will always be single sex spaces at the School and any requests for social transition will not include allowing access to these spaces. Pupils should use the facilities designated for their biological sex, though there are some unisex toilets in the School which could be used for changing purposes. Unisex showers are not currently available.

6. Boarding

- a. No pupil will be allowed to share a room with a pupil of the opposite sex. The National Minimum Standards for Boarding will be followed as appropriate.

7. Uniform

- a. For the Fourth and Fifth Form, the uniform is unisex. For the Sixth Form, pupils are welcome to wear either the boys or the girls uniform as they feel comfortable.

School Uniform for Fourth and Fifth Form

KWC Blazer with crest
KWC striped trousers or skirt
KWC grey and white striped shirt
KWC jumper (optional)
Black tights/over the knee socks or black/grey ankle socks
Plain black low-heeled polishable shoes
KWC scarf (optional)

FOURTH FORM Stenning tie
FIFTH FORM Senior tie
House Shirt

Sixth Form Girls' Uniform

Day Wear - School Uniform

Single coloured, matching tailored suit
Single coloured smart blouse
Single coloured, v-neck jumper
Black tights
Dark, smart, sensible shoes

Best Dress

Black tailored suit with matching skirt
White blouse
Black tights

Black, smart, sensible shoes

If you have been awarded full colours:

Colours blazer (optional)
Black Skirt
White Blouse
Colours tie (optional)
Black, smart, sensible shoes

House Shirt

Boys' Uniform

Day Wear - School Uniform

Single coloured, matching tailored suit
Single coloured shirt with a smart tie
Single coloured, v-neck jumper
Dark socks
Black or brown polished shoes

Best Dress

Black tailored suit
White shirt
Sixth Form tie
Black socks
Black polished shoes

If you have been awarded full colours:

Colours blazer (optional)
Black Trousers
White Shirt
Colours tie (optional)
Black polished shoes

House Shirt

8. Physical Education and Sport

The School will ensure that all pupils participate in sport safely and maximum participation is encouraged. At The Buchan School, a more relaxed participation to mixed-sex sport may be taken. However, as pupils get older, size, speed and strength become a consideration and the risk of injury will always be considered highly. For pupil requests to take part in events intended for the opposite biological sex, the following will be considered:

- Age of the pupil making the request
- Safety of the pupils in mixed-sex participation
- Fairness of allowing single sex participation.