

Guidance in supporting students who are questioning their gender identity

RATIONALE FOR GUIDANCE

St Laurence is an inclusive school and we celebrate the diversity of our community; we are committed to the values of compassion, equity and respect and we do not tolerate prejudice or discrimination. We aim to help our students to become the best they can be, true to themselves and ready for adult life. With this in mind, changes in society and culture do and should impact upon how we work together in our school community.

Over the last few years, there have been several occasions when students at St Laurence have questioned their gender identity and we feel that this is an area for which we now need to offer clear guidance to the school community. Rights relating to the transgender population have existed for a number of years and a person's transgender status is one of the protected characteristics in the [Equality Act 2010](#) and further reference is made to this in the School's [Policy on Equalities](#).

While we do not wish to over-formalise or document our response to all possible scenarios, this document aims to give everyone involved in the school (parents, staff, students and governors) some guidance as to how the school will respond to situations where students ask us about our approach to gender identity or wish to consider changing their own gender identity.

OUR APPROACH TO TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

Our fundamental duty is to look after each student's well-being: our students come first, and this will always guide our response. In the workplace and the world into which our students will be moving as adults, it is increasingly now the expectation that issues of gender identity are acknowledged and handled in a respectful and inclusive way. St Laurence believes it should apply the same approach, bearing in mind that we are teaching our students both how to play their part in a wider community and that diversity enriches that community.

St Laurence will take a neutral stance, neither encouraging nor discouraging a particular decision by the student. We will deal with gender identity in the way we would with any other issue where a student is asking for help in coming to an important decision. In most circumstances, we will contact the family only with the student's permission, and at a time when the student is ready for us to do so. Until the family has been informed and involved, we cannot move forward with a transition plan for the student who wishes to change gender but we will continue to offer support. We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and therefore there may be some circumstances in which we have to contact the family without the student's permission.

We endeavour to ensure we have a process in place which respects an individual's right to take an informed decision and to be supported following the choice they make. The school will handle all information relating to a student's circumstances sensitively, confidentially and neutrally. It expects students (and any others involved in the process) to behave likewise. In particular, students are reminded of the ICT code of conduct which applies to all their activity within or related to the School.

Members of staff at St Laurence School have attended Stonewall training on championing LGBT issues, and together with the pastoral team, the School will support any students questioning their gender identity. The school's role will be to make sure the student knows and understands the consequences and to help them to consider and reflect on the implications, before any steps are taken to implement a decision.

LEGAL AND MORAL FRAMEWORK

We appreciate that within the school community, including amongst parents and carers, there will be differing levels of knowledge of the issues relating to gender identity and while respecting the considered preference of the student on identity issues within the school environment, there will also need to be parameters in place to ensure that the outside world has an accurate view of laws surround a person's gender status.

The Human Rights Act gives certain rights and freedoms to all individuals. We are confident that the approach the school is taking discharges our duties to respect the relevant rights of students, who may be seeking to change their gender identity, when balanced against the rights of all the students in our care. The law as it stands protects individuals who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have been through gender reassignment from being treated less favourably than those who haven't transitioned gender.

Legally, an individual retains the gender on their birth certificate until that is changed through an appropriate application. That means that while there can be an agreement that a student adopts a different or non-binary identity within the school, there may be situations in which the school will need to continue to use the birth name (and birth gender) in certain formal situations. These are likely to include, but are potentially not limited to:

- Public exam entries
- Official certificates
- The School's SIMS database
- UCAS applications
- Referrals to external agencies

The following are examples of situations in which the chosen gender identity (and name) may be used:

- Students are free to wear clothing (including in PE and Dance lessons) of the gender with which they identify. Please see the [School Uniform policy](#) for the requirements
- School reports, together with any formal communication, for example with parents,
- Being addressed or referred to by teachers and peers
- Auditioning for a mixed gender play where the student may wish to audition for any role
- Sports activities and teams
- Adjustments to existing toilet arrangements; the School will make gender-neutral toilets available
- Adjustments to existing changing facilities; the School will make gender-neutral changing areas available
- If participating in a residential trip, the student will be free to access the dormitories/rooms of the of the gender with which they identify
- If participating in an exchange, the student will be free to use the preferred gender identity and to make this known in advance to the exchange family

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

You may wish to find out more about gender identity and gender dysphoria and we recommend that individuals and their families seek support from organisations that can offer the right kind of advice and guidance. The family GP is the most important point of access to local help, advice and support as they can make referrals to other health services. Below is a list of other organisations that may be able to provide some further information and support or answer questions you may have.

National Organisations:

- [Stonewall](#)
- [Allsorts](#)
- [The Tavistock Gender Clinic, London](#)
- [Young Stonewall](#)
- [Gendered Intelligence](#)
- [Mermaids](#): 0208 1234819 and info@mermaidsuk.org.uk
- [GIRES](#): 01372 801554
- [Gender Trust](#): 01527 894838
- [RUCO](#): a safe support group for young people
- [On Your Mind](#): Online support for young people and parents/carers:

Local Organisations:

- LGBT support group: <http://lgbtbristol.org.uk/trans/>
- LGBT support group: <http://www.bristol-crossroads.org.uk/>
- Online support for young people: <https://www.kooth.com>
- Trowbridge LGBT youth support group: Call 07920 450 618 for more info

General Support:

- Childline: 0800 1111 – <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Further Publications:

- [Top Tips for working with Trans and Gender Questioning young people](#)
- [A journey without a map: A guide for parents of Trans Children](#)
- [Tackling homophobia in secondary schools](#)
- [Supporting Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual young people](#)

Online Media:

- [I am Leo](#) YouTube video
- [Teenager makes Transgender film](#) BBC article

Within St Laurence – initial guidance to students:

“In the first instance, you may wish to speak to someone you know well.

Your Assistant Head of House or Head of House can organise an appointment for you to see a counsellor or you may wish to talk to someone in the Safeguarding Team (Mr Penny, Mrs Power, Mr Dutton or Ms Purnell)”

GLOSSARY OF KEY GENDER IDENTITY TERMS

Sex: the physical and biological characteristics that define men and women e.g. 'That person has XX chromosomes, so their sex is female.'

Gender: someone's personal conception of themselves as male or female, or more rarely both or neither. e.g. 'This award is for people whose gender is female.'

Assigned gender at birth: the gender assumed of someone when they were born – people were almost always assigned either male or female at birth (often shortened to AFAB and AMAB). e.g. 'Although he identifies as male, he was assigned female at birth.'

Transgender: an adjective to refer to someone whose gender does not align with the gender they were assigned at birth, often shortened to just 'trans'. e.g. 'There are many transgender people living in the UK.'

Cisgender: someone who is not trans, whose gender does align with their assigned gender at birth. e.g. 'She said she's not trans, so she must be cisgender.'

Non-binary: someone who does not identify as wholly male or wholly female. eg 'Many people know that Charlie's non-binary.'

Preferred pronouns: the pronouns someone wishes you use for them, aligned with their gender identity, most often 'she/her', 'he/him', or 'they/them' (in its singular form). e.g. 'Actually, my preferred pronouns are he/him.' or 'I was talking to Sam and they asked me to collect their homework today.'

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