

Sex and gender in schools: what parents can do

1. Equality, anti-bullying, trans inclusion and other policies

Are the protected characteristics of sex and gender reassignment properly stated?

See the Equality Act, which describes nine protected characteristics. “Gender” and “gender identity” are not among them.

Are sex (biology) and gender identity (personal belief) clearly distinguished?

If gender identity is mentioned at all, there should be no suggestion that everyone has a gender identity, or that this is what makes children boys/girls/non-binary etc.

Are rules about single-sex facilities and sports stated in sex-based terms?

Single-sex sports are permitted by law. Entry should be by (biological) sex, not “gender identity”. Failure to offer girl-only sports may constitute indirect sex discrimination, since after puberty boys are larger, stronger and faster.

Are policies clear about supporting children with a wide range of issues, and avoiding unlawful discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics?

Schools are bound by the public-sector equality duty, which requires them to promote equality for all protected characteristics. They should not focus narrowly on trans identities, still less allow that focus to lead them to discriminate unlawfully (for example on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, disability and religion or belief).

Are policies clear that “sex-realist” beliefs, both secular (“gender-critical”) and religious (for example Orthodox Judaism), are protected and not motivated by bigotry?

“Gender-critical” beliefs are protected by the Equality Act, as are mainstream religions that require acknowledgement of binary sex in behaviour and speech.

Are policies supportive of freedom of belief and speech?

Tenets of gender theory such as using “preferred pronouns” should not be compulsory. Disagreement with gender theory should not be described as bullying or harassment. Children have legal rights to freedom of belief and speech. Child safeguarding requires professionals to talk clearly about everyone’s sex in order to carry out effective risk assessment.

Are policies clear that all children, no matter how they identify, remain girls or boys according to their sex as recorded at birth?

Schools are under a statutory duty to record pupils’ sex accurately. Pupils should therefore not be permitted to change their sex in school records, with or without parental consent. Schools cannot lawfully accommodate full social transition (including “preferred pronouns” and access to opposite-sex spaces), since it infringes on other pupils’ rights and hampers safeguarding.

Does the school acknowledge that parents have primary responsibility for their children's well-being and education?

Parents should be respected as valued partners, and be easily able to find out what their children are being taught. No policy or practice should suggest that a school will keep secrets from parents (except in line with standard safeguarding procedures).

Does the school understand that it is not its place to oversee, still less initiate, major psychomedical interventions such as social transition?

As Dr Hilary Cass has said in the interim report of her review of paediatric gender medicine, social transition is "not a neutral act". Schools and teachers should not overstep their remit by straying into medical or psychological areas.

2. Lessons and the school environment

Is all teaching, including science, literacy and RSE (relationships and sex education) or PSHE (personal, social, health and economic education), clear about the immutable, physiological reality of binary sex? Does it avoid claims that performance of sex stereotypes is linked to identity?

Schools must teach scientific facts, and avoid presenting contested ideology as fact. Children should not be told that sex is not binary, fluid, a spectrum or, hard to determine; or that what makes children boys or girls is how they feel or act.

Does the school use ideological materials from groups such as Stonewall, Gendered Intelligence, Mermaids or the Proud Trust, or books such as "Introducing Teddy" or "I Am Jazz"?

Government guidance says that schools "should not reinforce harmful stereotypes, for instance by suggesting that children might be a different gender based on their personality and interests or the clothes they prefer to wear. Resources used in teaching about this topic must always be age-appropriate and evidence based. Materials which suggest that non-conformity to gender stereotypes should be seen as synonymous with having a different gender identity should not be used and you should not work with external agencies or organisations that produce such material."

If there is an LGBT club, is it safeguarding-friendly and free of gender-identity ideology?

Such clubs should always be run by teachers, not pupils. Staff versed in safeguarding should vet speakers and materials, and veto proselytisation for gender theory. Clubs should not promote or support social transition, and should be transparent to parents.

Do assemblies, signs and posters cheerlead for gender theory?

No school should have posters listing trans identities with special flags or "all-gender" toilet signs, which are ideological and biased. Teachers should not wear pronoun badges or put pronouns in their email signatures, since these suggest that sex-realist views are unwelcome. Schools should not celebrate festivals such as Transgender Day of Remembrance.

For resources for parents, including support groups, advice from therapists, guidance for schools and information on how to challenge flawed policies, see sex-matters.org/resources-for-parents