

P21 Gender Identity Guidance

1. Introduction

This guidance document explains The Purcell School's approach to transgender and gender identity matters within the school, sets out briefly the school's legal obligations in this regard and provides some guidance in relation to some of the practical issues that might arise in this area.

This guidance applies to all year groups at the school.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the school's other policies including the Admissions Policy; School Rules; Anti-Bullying Policy; Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; Equality and Diversity Policy; Relationship & Sex Education Policy.

2. Background

The Purcell School is committed to promoting an inclusive, safe and happy community where everyone feels welcome and can thrive. This commitment underpins all that we do. We expect all members of the community to treat one another with mutual respect and to celebrate difference.

Gender identity is an issue which may impact on some members of the school community. It can be a sensitive topic and one about which there are differing views.

The school recognises that students may articulate their gender identity in different ways (and that this may change over time), for example, by expressing that their gender identity is different to the sex they were assigned at birth or by expressing that their sense of self does not fit with the idea of binary gender at all.

Transgender or trans is a term commonly used to describe people whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned (registered) at birth. A range of terms are used to describe different gender identities and an explanation of some of the current vocabulary is included at the end of this guidance (while recognising that this is an evolving area).

For simplicity, we will use the term 'trans student' to refer to students who have expressed an intention to identify with a gender that differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

3. Principles

- The safety and wellbeing of students is the school's priority and their welfare will always be the paramount consideration.
- The school is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and creating a welcoming, tolerant and respectful school community where everyone can thrive. The school has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying (whether related to gender, sex or otherwise) and takes a strong, proactive stand against all forms of bullying.

- The school is committed to challenging stereotyping including on the basis of sex or gender.
- The school recognises that the question of gender identity is a complex and personal one. However, the school will not initiate any action regarding children who are questioning their gender. The school will only respond to a request relating to social transition raised by a child or their parent/carer.
- Where a child or parent/carer raises a request relating to social transition, the school will take time to understand the thoughts and feelings of the child and be appropriately professionally curious. The school recognises that children questioning their gender may be potentially vulnerable in terms of mental health and psychosocial needs, for example relating to relationships with family and peers, or their broader social environment, including discriminatory bullying.
- The school will take a very careful approach to any request relating to social transition. For younger students (Years 7-9), the school will take particular caution and support for full social transition will be agreed very rarely.
- Any response to a request relating to social transition will require a tailored approach developed through consultation with the student and, as a matter of priority, their parents or guardians, except in exceptionally rare circumstances where involving parents would constitute a greater risk to the child than not involving them.
- The school will always seek to cultivate an open and constructive dialogue with parents or guardians and will treat their views with due importance.
- When making decisions on how to respond to any request relating to social transition, the school will ensure that decisions are based on:
 - Our statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children
 - The importance of actively involving parents/carers as a matter of priority
 - Taking a very careful approach to social transition
 - Our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998
- The school will document its decision-making process and keep records of any arrangements put in place, which will be reviewed regularly.

4. Legislation and guidance

This guidance has been prepared with reference to relevant legislation and statutory guidance:

- The Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Public Sector Equality Duty

- Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Relationship and sex education (RSE) and health education statutory guidance
- Data Protection Act 2018 (and UK General Data Protection Regulations 2018)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

4.1 The Equality Act 2010

This act ensures legal protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation for everyone who has one or more of the specified 'protected characteristics'. Under this act we must ensure that our admissions and our provision of education, benefits, facilities and other services do not unlawfully discriminate (either directly or indirectly via policies, applied criteria or practices), harass or victimise students on the basis of any of the protected characteristics. There are nine protected characteristics under the Act, including gender reassignment and sex.

Under the Act, a student's legal sex (when they are under 18) will be their natal sex i.e. that which they were assigned at birth by reference to biological tests. After 18 a person can obtain a gender recognition certificate pursuant to the Gender Recognition Act 2004, and, as a consequence, their sex becomes their "acquired gender" (i.e. the gender in which they are living).

'Gender reassignment' is defined as follows: *"a person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of assigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex."*

The Equality & Human Rights Commission confirms that an individual need not have *"undergone any specific treatment or surgery to change from [their] birth sex to [their] preferred gender. This is because changing your physiological or other gender attributes is a personal process rather than a medical one."* The individual can be *"at any stage in the transition process – from proposing to reassign [their] gender, to undergoing a process ... or having completed it."*

This means that any student who is legally one sex but makes clear an intention to identify with another sex (including by expressing a non-binary or gender non-conforming or gender fluid identity) is likely to have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, be protected under the Act and should not be subject to unlawful discrimination as a result.

4.2 The Data Protection Act 2018

Information about a transgender person's status could be included under 'special category data' and is therefore subject to tighter controls than other personal data. The Purcell School will ensure that any such data is processed in accordance with all relevant data protection laws and the school's own Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notice and Safeguarding Policy. In any event, matters relating to a student's gender identity will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality, and in accordance with relevant policies.

5. Discrimination and bullying

The Purcell School does not discriminate against students on the grounds of their sex or transgender status and acknowledges that the Equality Act 2010 applies to employment and provision of education (as set out above).

The Purcell School has a number of policies which will guide its response to any allegation of discriminatory behaviour. These include:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy

Any trans-phobic, sexist or other discriminatory incidents should be recorded and dealt with in the same manner as other incidents motivated by prejudice, based on characteristics such as race or sexuality.

6. Our approach

It can never be the school's role to encourage or discourage a student to take a particular decision concerning their gender identity or expression of it. Our role is to create a supportive environment for any student who is questioning their gender identity, identifying as trans or is seeking to identify as a different gender from their natal sex, in whatever way.

Students should feel able to speak to school staff and their fellow students about these issues and be responded to in a respectful and supportive manner. As noted above, the welfare of students is paramount and will always guide our response.

The Purcell School will comply with its legal obligations towards any trans student. Any trans student will be treated on an individual basis with the response based on the guiding principles of achieving best outcomes for the welfare and wellbeing of the individual concerned within the school community. The wishes and needs of a trans student will be accommodated to the extent reasonably possible and practicable, taking into account all relevant factors – including the school's legal and regulatory obligation and its duties towards the wider school community, including the welfare and needs of other students.

Appropriate support will be made available to any trans student in consultation with them via our pastoral teams and through external experts, as appropriate, and in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

All students can expect, at all times, to be treated with respect and kindness - and should expect to treat others in the community in the same way.

The school recognises that transitioning or questioning one's gender identity will be personal to each individual student and may include any number of changes to a person's life which could change over time. We acknowledge that each transgender student's journey is individual and therefore the support that they need or want will vary. However, we have set out some general guidance below, addressing the key issues which are likely to arise in the school environment.

6.1 Parental Involvement

The school must actively involve parents/carers where a child who is questioning their gender asks for support, unless there are circumstances where doing this would constitute a greater risk to the child than not involving them [KCSIE, September 2026].

Parents/carers will be involved as a matter of priority and their views will be treated with importance. The school recognises that, in the vast majority of cases, working in partnership with parents/carers is essential to achieving the best outcomes for the child.

Staff should not adopt any changes relating to social transition unless a decision has been made by the school and the child's parents/carers have been involved. Any changes relating to social transition must only be implemented following instruction from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The threshold for not involving parents is very high. The school will only proceed without parental involvement in exceptionally rare circumstances where there is clear evidence that involving parents would pose a greater risk to the child than not involving them. Such decisions will only be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead in consultation with the Principal, and will be fully documented with clear reasoning.

6.2 Confidentiality and information sharing

Communication with the individual student about their needs and circumstances is crucial to informing the school's response.

Information about a student's gender identity is sensitive and should be processed appropriately in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notice and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Any member of staff who is told by a student that they are questioning their gender or wish to make a request relating to social transition should:

- Respectfully acknowledge the information
- Not promise absolute confidentiality
- Explain that they will need to share the information with the DSL
- Ask the student's permission to share the information with senior leaders and parents/carers

The staff member should then promptly inform the DSL, who will coordinate the school's response in line with this guidance. The decision-making framework is outlined in Annex 1.

Where a student has made a request relating to social transition, the DSL will, as a matter of priority, arrange a meeting with the student's parents/carers to discuss the request and the school's response, except in the exceptionally rare circumstances outlined above.

We will liaise with external agencies as appropriate, such as social care and CAMHS so they can provide the best support they can for both the student and the family. Confidential information about students must not be shared with other parents unless necessary, and any queries or questions from other parents should be referred to the Principal or DSL.

6.3 Recording of Biological Sex

The school is legally required to record a child's biological sex accurately wherever it is recorded. The school will record each student's biological sex (the sex they were assigned at birth) accurately in all school systems and records. This is a legal requirement and applies to:

- SIMS and other management information systems
- Safeguarding and child protection records (including MyConcern)
- Medical records (including Medical Tracker)
- Examination registrations
- Census returns and statutory data collections
- Any other official records

Where a student is using a different name or pronouns at school (following the decision-making process outlined in this guidance), this will be noted separately, but the student's biological sex will continue to be recorded accurately.

Staff must ensure that biological sex is recorded correctly and must not alter these records to reflect a different gender identity.

6.4 Name changes and different pronouns

The school recognises that, where a student is questioning their gender, they may wish to use a different name and/or pronouns. However, staff should not adopt any changes relating to social transition unless a decision has been made by the school and the child's parents/carers have been involved.

Where a student or their parent/carer makes a request for the student to use a different name and/or pronouns at school, the school will follow the decision-making framework outlined at Annex 1.

If, following this process, the school agrees to recognise a change of name and/or pronouns, the following will apply:

6.4.1 Informal Name Changes

A formal name change (by Deed Poll) is not required for the school to refer to a student by a different name internally. Where agreed, the school will seek to update internal systems (such as registers, Google Workspace, email) to reflect the preferred name, to minimise mistakes.

The student's legal name will continue to be used for:

- Official school records and the single central record
- Examination registrations (academic and music)
- Census returns and statutory data collections
- Communications with parents/carers (unless parents have requested otherwise)
- Any legal documents

6.4.2 Pronouns

Where agreed, staff will use the student's preferred pronouns. If mistakes are made, staff should apologise and correct themselves.

The school recognises that some staff may find this challenging and will provide appropriate support and guidance.

6.4.3 Implementation

A named member of staff will coordinate the implementation of any agreed changes. Relevant staff will be informed on a need-to-know basis, with appropriate regard to confidentiality.

The arrangements will be reviewed regularly (at least termly)

6.4.4 External Examinations

Students may be required to use their legal name for formal external examination registration (academic and music), even if they are using a different name at school. The school will:

- Discuss this sensitively with the student and their family in advance
- Liaise with examination bodies where necessary to clarify requirements
- Provide appropriate support to the student during examination periods

6.5 School Uniform

All students are expected to follow The Purcell School's guidelines on school dress at all times. The absence of a formal school uniform enables students a considerable degree of leeway in what students choose to wear, and many students use this as a means of self-expression, including in relation to their gender identity.

6.6 Boarding

Boarding provision at The Purcell School is based within three boarding houses:

- Avison - Years 7-9 - for boys and girls
- Sunley - Years 9-12 - for girls only
- Ellington - Years 10-13 - for boys and girls.

Rooms are generally shared up to and including Year 12. Single rooms are available in Sunley and Ellington.

Schools must not allow children into toilets, changing rooms or showers designated for the opposite biological sex. This includes where schools are responding to a request to support social transition for children who are questioning their gender. This requirement applies equally to boarding and residential accommodation.

All students must be accommodated in boarding houses and rooms designated for their biological sex. There are no exceptions to this rule, including for students who are questioning their gender or who are socially transitioning.

Careful consideration will be given to the allocation of rooms for a trans student during their time at the school. This consideration recognises that there may be issues of confidentiality, privacy,

cultural sensitivity, or personal opinions about gender and sexuality amongst the wider boarding and school community which need to be duly taken into account. At all times, respect and kindness should underpin the responses and behaviour of all those concerned.

Where a student expresses concerns about using boarding accommodation designated for their biological sex, the school will:

- Discuss the concerns sensitively with the student and their parents/carers
- Consider whether alternative arrangements can be provided (e.g., a single room within the appropriate boarding house) that:
 - Do not compromise the provision of single-sex accommodation for other students
 - Do not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the student or any other students
 - Are reasonably practicable given the school's boarding facilities
- Document the arrangement and review it regularly

The school recognises that some trans students may prefer to have a single room, and will endeavour to accommodate this where practically possible, taking into account the constraints of the school's accommodation provision and the needs of all boarding students.

Any arrangements will be documented, communicated appropriately to relevant staff, and reviewed at least termly.

6.7 Toilets

Schools must not allow children into toilets, changing rooms or showers designated for the opposite biological sex. This includes where schools are responding to a request to support social transition for children who are questioning their gender.

Toilets at The Purcell School are designated Male and Female (for Students), and for Staff/Visitors. Lavatory cubicles with shared washbasins are the norm.

All students must use the toilet facilities designated for their biological sex. There are no exceptions to this rule, including for students who are questioning their gender or who are socially transitioning.

If a student who is questioning their gender doesn't want to use the toilet, changing rooms and showers designated for their biological sex, schools should consider whether they can provide alternative facilities that don't compromise the provision of single-sex facilities, or the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the child or any other children.

Where a student expresses that they do not wish to use the toilet facilities designated for their biological sex, the school will:

- Discuss the concerns sensitively with the student and their parents/carers
- Consider whether alternative facilities can be provided (e.g., accessible/disabled toilet, staff toilet) that:
 - Do not compromise the provision of single-sex facilities for other students
 - Do not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the student or any other students

- Do not compromise the school's duty to provide separate and suitable facilities for students and adults
- Are reasonably practicable given the school's facilities
- Document the arrangement and review it regularly

The school will keep a record of any such arrangements, ensure they are communicated appropriately to relevant staff, and review them at least termly.

6.8 Changing facilities and off-site trips

There are no designated changing facilities at The Purcell School. Instead, boarding houses enable students to change in their own rooms. Day students are offered 'green room' facilities as and when necessary, and consideration will be given on an individual basis to the needs and wishes of students.

The same principles outlined above for toilets apply to any changing facilities. Students must not use changing facilities designated for the opposite biological sex, with no exceptions.

Where alternative arrangements are needed, these will be considered in line with the principles above.

6.9 Off-site trips

Students questioning their gender are entitled to equal access to off-site events, visits and trips.

The same mandatory requirements regarding toilets, changing facilities and sleeping accommodation apply to off-site trips and visits. Students must not access facilities designated for the opposite biological sex, with no exceptions.

For such occasions the Director of Music will:

- Consider the needs of all students, including those questioning their gender, from the earliest planning stage
- Ensure that appropriate facilities are available that comply with the requirements of this guidance
- Discuss arrangements with the student and their parents/carers in advance where relevant
- Brief the trip leader appropriately and in confidence

When making arrangements for trips, the Director of Music and trip leader will take into account:

- The mandatory requirements regarding single-sex facilities
- The wishes and welfare of the student questioning their gender
- The welfare of all other students
- The particular circumstances of the trip and facilities available
- What is reasonably practicable

Where a student does not wish to use facilities designated for their biological sex, the school will consider whether alternative facilities can be provided (e.g., single-occupancy rooms, separate bathroom facilities) that:

- Do not compromise the provision of single-sex facilities for other students
- Do not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of any students
- Are reasonably practicable given the trip arrangements and venue facilities

All arrangements will be documented and communicated appropriately to relevant staff.

6.10 Physical Education and Sport

We consider that PE develops competence and confidence and we will endeavour to ensure that trans students have the same access to sport and physical education while at school as everyone else. There may be situations (albeit not often) where this is not appropriate for a trans student to participate in certain activities (most likely when the trans student is post-puberty) on the basis of:

- Safety (of the student and others); and
- Fair competition.

Schools can separate children according to their biological sex when playing certain competitive sports without discriminating unlawfully against them on the basis of their sex.

The Purcell School does not consider that there will be many, if any, issues with trans students participating fully in its PE programme. If any issues are identified, we will try to manage these within the lessons rather than preventing trans students from participating wherever possible, and will consult any relevant guidance (for example from a sport governing body) where applicable.

6.10.1 Single-Sex Sports for Safety

Some sports may need to be played in single-sex groups from a certain age to ensure children's safety, and where this is the case, there must be no exceptions.

The school will identify which sports must be played as single-sex from a certain age to ensure students' safety. For these sports:

- Students will participate according to their biological sex
- There are no exceptions, including for students who are questioning their gender or socially transitioning
- The school will communicate clearly to students and parents which sports fall into this category and from what age

6.10.2 Single-Sex Sports for Fairness

The school may also separate sports according to biological sex on the grounds of fairness, where the physical strength, stamina or physique of the average girl would put her at a disadvantage in competition with the average boy (or vice versa). This segregation is not considered discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010.

6.10.3 Sports Without Safety Concerns

Where there are no safety concerns and a child makes a request relating to how they participate, schools will need to consider the request in light of advice on 'considering requests for support with social transition'.

Where there are no safety concerns, and a student makes a request about how they participate in PE or sport, the school will:

- Follow the decision-making framework outlined in this guidance
- Consider the request in light of the best interests of the child
- Consider the impact on other children
- Aim to create a safe and fair environment for all children to participate in PE

6.10.4 Changing Facilities

Students must use changing facilities designated for their biological sex, as outlined in Section 6.8 of this guidance.

6.11 PSHE and RSE education

Our RSE and health education will ensure the needs of all students are appropriately met and that all students understand the importance of equality, respect and the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (with particular reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, including sex and gender reassignment).

We will ensure teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content. Any teaching on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans) issues will be fully integrated into programmes of study and will be delivered at a timely point as part of students' curriculum.

[See our Relationship & Sex Education Policy for more details].

<i>Guidance author / reviewer:</i>	<i>Guidance date / review date:</i>	<i>Next review due:</i>
P Bambrough	September 2022	September 2023
P Bambrough	September 2023	September 2024
P Bambrough	September 2024	September 2025
P Bambrough	September 2025	September 2026
Z Szafranski	September 2026	September 2027

Annex 1 - Decision Making Framework

When a child or their parent/carers raises a request relating to social transition, the school will follow this decision-making framework:

Step 1: Initial Response

- The staff member who receives the request will inform the DSL immediately
- The DSL will document the request, including the date, who made it, and what was requested
- No changes will be made at this stage

Step 2: Parental Involvement

- The DSL will, as a matter of priority, arrange a meeting with the student's parents/carers (unless the exceptionally rare circumstances outlined in this guidance apply)
- The meeting will include the DSL, the student (where appropriate), parents/carers, and other relevant staff (e.g., Director of Sixth Form, Director of Boarding, Head of House)
- The school will take time to understand the thoughts and feelings of the child and be appropriately professionally curious

Step 3: Assessment

The DSL, in consultation with the Principal and other relevant staff, will assess:

- The specific nature of the request
- The age and developmental stage of the student (with particular caution for Years 7-9)
- The student's welfare and best interests
- The welfare and best interests of other students who may be affected
- Any safeguarding concerns, including mental health and psychosocial needs
- The views of parents/carers
- The school's statutory duties under safeguarding legislation
- The school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998
- What is reasonably practicable within the school's resources and facilities
- Any relevant external professional advice (e.g., from CAMHS, social care)

Step 4: Decision

- The DSL and Principal will make a decision on how the school will respond to the request
- The decision will be communicated in writing to the student and parents/carers, with clear reasons

- The decision will be fully documented, including:
 - The request received
 - Who was consulted
 - What factors were considered
 - The reasons for the decision
 - What arrangements (if any) will be put in place
 - The date for review

Step 5: Implementation and Review

- If any arrangements are agreed, these will be implemented with clear communication to relevant staff
- A named member of staff will be assigned to coordinate any arrangements and provide a central point of contact
- Arrangements will be reviewed at least termly, or sooner if circumstances change
- Reviews will involve the student, parents/carers, DSL and other relevant staff

Support Throughout

Throughout this process, the school will:

- Ensure appropriate pastoral support is available to the student
- Liaise with external agencies as appropriate (e.g., CAMHS, social care)
- Maintain sensitivity and confidentiality
- Keep detailed records in line with safeguarding procedures

Annex 2 - Key Terms

Cisgender/Cis – someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is an alternative term.

Gender – often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is often assumed from the sex assigned at birth but individuals may identify differently (including as non-binary or gender fluid).

Gender expression – how a person chooses to outwardly express their gender, within the context of social expectations of gender. A person who does not conform to societal expectations of gender may not, however, identify as trans.

Gender identity – a person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary), which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth.

Gender reassignment – see definition above in the guidance under 'Legislation and Guidance'.

Intersex – a term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary.

Non-binary – an umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'.

Sex – assigned to a person at birth on the basis of primary sex characteristics and reproductive functions. Legal sex can be changed subject to the issue of a Gender Recognition Certificate.

Transgender man – someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. Abbreviated to trans man or FTM.

Transgender woman – someone who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. Abbreviated to trans woman or MTF.

Transitioning – the steps a trans person may take to live in the gender in which they identify. For some, this involves medical intervention but not all trans people want or are able to have this. Transitioning may also involve things like telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

Transphobia – the fear, dislike of or prejudice against someone based on the fact they are trans.