

Empowering all to achieve



Severn Vale School
An Academy

Severn Vale School
Whole School Approach to Transgender Students
2024/25

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1. Foreword

Severn Vale School celebrates and values the diversity of its community and is committed to treating all students with dignity and respect. We seek to provide a positive learning environment which is free from discrimination and harassment.

We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches to support identified students. By developing and implementing a practical, relevant and effective whole school approach we can promote a safe and welcoming environment where each identified student feels valued and respected. We recognise and appreciate the sensitivity and complexity of each case and will therefore endeavour to provide an individual and tailored approach for each identified student.

This document describes the school's approach to supporting students and their families and is intended as information and guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

This document should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy in cases where there are safeguarding concerns; the Anti-bullying and Conflict policy in cases where there are concerns about discrimination; the Mental Health and Well-Being Approach in cases where the student is affected by mental health and the Educational Visits Policy in cases where the student will be taking part in a school trip.

2. Gender Identity

Severn Vale School are aware that this is a contested belief. For the purpose of this policy, we have sought guidance from the NSPCC and have used the following definition:

Gender identity describes how a person feels about their gender. For many, their gender identity corresponds to the sex they were registered at birth. For others, it does not. Some people see gender identity as more of a spectrum, rather than a binary. There are many other expressions of gender identity, including non-binary and genderfluid, and for some, the concept of gender isn't relevant to their identity.

Gender identity is a personal feeling, and a child or young person will be the best person to know what identifier matches how they feel. Children and young people can also question or feel unsure about their gender identity or find that their gender identity changes over time.

Severn Vale School recognises that a transgender person feels that their sex does not match up with the way they feel internally about their gender identity. A female to male (FTM, or trans male) person will have been assigned as female at birth but will identify as male; a male to female (MTF, or trans female) person will have been assigned as male at birth but will identify as female.

The term **Transgender**, often shortened to **trans**, is a word used to describe people who identify as a different gender to that which they were assigned at birth. However, it is also an umbrella term which can include people who do not feel exclusively male or female (non-binary). Gender can be considered fluid, and some people that do not relate to their assigned gender may never transition. Some people choose to use alternative pronouns. For example, someone who is gender fluid but chooses to keep their sex as male, may prefer to be known by 'she/her/hers' pronouns. Others may prefer to be known by 'they/them/theirs'.

Gender Dysphoria is a clinical condition that can present from a very early age and can only be diagnosed by a medical expert. A person diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria may require treatment, e.g. hormone blockers to delay puberty, before being prescribed hormones of their desired gender. A transgender person may live their life without being or needing to be diagnosed as having Gender Dysphoria.

Diagnosis and treatment for young people is available from specialist Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) – which are available in many locations across the UK. It must be understood that some people with Gender Dysphoria may not want any treatment. Some may choose to be known by a different name or to wear

different clothes. However, most young transgender people (and their families) will need support as they grow up and develop.

3. Statement of Intent

Severn Vale School recognises that transgender young people and their families face particular challenges and hurdles and are likely to need extra support from the school to help them achieve their potential. Practice supporting transgender students is embedded across school policies and curriculum and builds on best practice already in place to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

In developing practice to support transgender students, we will aim to:

- Listen to the child, their parents, carers and siblings and wherever possible follow their lead and preferences in a collaborative approach
- Provide a safe and secure environment for transgender students
- Provide a supportive, respectful and welcoming environment for transgender students
- Ensure that transgender students have safe use of facilities which are in line with legislation
- Promote positive attitudes to gender diversity by including trans issues within activities relating to discrimination, hate crime, diversity, inclusion, SRE and PSHE.
- Challenge bullying and discrimination
- Increase understanding and awareness in staff and students
- Provide support, guidance and training to staff working with young people who identify as transgender
- Provide support and advise students, parents and carers in securing further support from medical professionals

Key staff:

All staff, teaching and non-teaching, have a responsibility to both promote a welcoming, safe environment and help identify concerns. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Corinna Braithwaite – LGBTQ co-ordinator.
- Mark Nichols – Safeguarding Lead
- Barry Hockaday – Subject Leader for Futures

Support will also be provided by the safeguarding leads and relevant pastoral teams.

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this document and for clarity, the following definitions from The Government of Equalities (2021) *Appendix 1* will be used. Available at: [Appendix 1: Glossary - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90222/Appendix_1_Glossary.pdf)

Cisgender: Used in this report to refer to people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth – people who are not transgender.

Gender dysphoria: A medical diagnosis that someone is experiencing discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex and their gender identity.

Gender expression: A person's outward expression of their gender. This may differ from their gender identity or it may reflect it.

Gender identity: A person's internal sense of their own gender. This does not have to be man or woman. It could be, for example, non-binary.

Gender incongruence: A mismatch between someone's sex and their gender identity. This may or may not be accompanied by discomfort or distress. This is identified as a sexual health issue by the WHO and not a mental or behavioural disorder.

Gender reassignment: A protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. 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 reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex".

Intersex: An umbrella term for people with sex characteristics (hormones, chromosomes and external or internal reproductive organs) that differ to those typically expected of a male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female, non-binary or intersex.

Minority gender identity: Used in this report to refer to anyone not identifying exclusively as a man or woman (for example, non-binary) or identifying as transgender or anyone with a transgender history.

Non-binary: An umbrella term used to describe gender identities where someone does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. They may regard themselves as neither exclusively a man nor a woman, or as both, or take another approach to gender entirely. There are many included within this, such as agender, genderqueer and gender fluid.

Sex: Registered by medical practitioners at birth based on physical characteristics. Sex can be either male or female. Assignment is based on hormones, chromosomes and genitalia.

Transgender or Trans: An umbrella term used to describe people who have a gender identity that is different to the sex recorded at birth. This might lead to gender dysphoria or incongruence. Non-binary people may or may not consider themselves to be transgender.

Transsexualism: A term historically used as a medical diagnosis for transgender people. This was later replaced with the diagnosis of gender identity disorder and most recently with the diagnosis of gender dysphoria or gender incongruence.

To clarify the terms surrounding transition, the following definitions from the GLAAD website will be used. Available at: [Glossary of Terms: Transgender | GLAAD](#)

Transition: the process a person undertakes to bring their gender expression and/or their body into alignment with their gender identity. It is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time and the exact steps involved in transition will vary from person to person.

Transition can include:

Social transition – Telling family, friends, and co-workers, using a different name, using different pronouns, dressing differently, starting or stopping wearing make-up and jewellery, etc

Legal transition – Changing your name and/or sex marker on documents like a driver's license, passport, Social Security record, bank accounts, etc.

Medical transition – Hormone replacement therapy and/or one or more surgical procedures.

5. Terminology and Language

It is good practice to focus on correct terminology and the use of factual language in school. As a school, it is a good idea to focus some education in relevant lessons (such as PSHE) and in an age-appropriate manner, around sexual orientation and gender identity, so that everyone has a clear understanding that sexual orientation (being heterosexual, bisexual, gay or lesbian) and gender identity (identifying with the traditional, societal and cultural expectations of being male or female), are completely different things.

6. Training

To ensure all staff and Governors have the skills to deal with transgender issues, the school will hold training sessions on topics such as:

- Safeguarding
- Confidentiality
- Gender Identity
- Privacy and dignity
- Tackling transphobia
- Relevant legislation

All topics will be covered during the INSET programme and relevant documents will be made available to staff via the shared area.

7. Dealing with requests from a student

The school takes a **do-no-harm approach** which ensures that children experiencing gender-identity issues are fully included and supported in education and safeguarding, without pressure to make life-defining choices at an early age.

Responding to Requests

A student may choose to disclose concerns about gender-identity to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure. If there is no change being requested, teachers can listen respectfully about a child's feelings without automatically alerting parents, but, for safeguarding reasons, cannot promise confidentiality.

Protocols for Staff:

If a student presents any issues regarding gender incongruence or gender dysmorphia:

1. Listen carefully to what the child is saying
2. Remain calm and take what the child is saying seriously ensuring that they know you are doing so
3. Reassure the child that they are doing the right thing by telling someone
4. Where possible ensure that you continue your conversation where you cannot be overheard
5. Do NOT promise confidentiality – Explain that you need to pass it on to Pastoral Staff
6. Do ask if the student has told another adult or is accessing support about how they are feeling
7. Do notify the relevant Head of Year and LGBTQ co-ordinator in person as soon as possible
8. Do follow up with an email account to the Head of Year and Assistant Headteacher (Key Stage) member on the same day

NB - If the nature of what the child says raises a Safeguarding concern please also notify the Safeguarding team as well.

Support for Students

Once a student has disclosed that they are questioning their gender identity, the school will allow for a period of watchful waiting. The pastoral team alongside the LGBGTQ co-ordinator will offer support to the student and allow time before considering a request to ensure that any unnecessary action is not taken.

The school acknowledge that in these formative years, it is not unusual for a child to question their identity and therefore this period of watchful waiting will allow the school to consider the context and seriousness of the request, and to ascertain if there are any factors which may have influenced the child. The LGBGTQ co-ordinator will meet with the child to discuss whether the child has been influenced by peers or social media; felt pressurised to identify differently due to societal stereotypes and to ascertain if there is an interaction with the child's sexual orientation. The pastoral team will also consider whether it is appropriate to seek input from the SENCO.

Where a child has disclosed that they are questioning or exploring their gender identity, we will make it clear that they are under no pressure to reach a particular outcome.

8. Informing Parents

Once a student has made a direct request for a change of circumstance, or there is a cause for concern regarding safeguarding and the student's well-being, the school will communicate with their parents/guardians and make them aware of the situation. The school will then work closely with the family to provide information and point them to support outside the school environment (for example, pastoral or medical support).

The school recognises that the views of parents are important, and as such, we would expect parental consent in the vast majority of cases before any action is taken.

Unfortunately, there may be occasions when, due to their own personal feelings or beliefs, a parent or guardian may not be supportive and pose a safeguarding risk. In this case, the school will liaise with external agencies such as Social Care and EWMHs so they can provide the best support for both the student and their family.

9. Actioning Requests

The school has a duty towards the student making a request to ensure that any agreed course of action is in their best interests. Once the school are satisfied that the student's request is valid and proportionate, any changes, including using a new name or new pronouns, will be agreed upon in accordance with the proper procedures and, in the vast majority of cases, with parental consent. Agreed changes will then be communicated to all relevant staff members.

The school recognise that other students, parents and teachers may hold protected religious or other beliefs that may conflict with any decisions made. In the pursuit of an inclusive and welcoming school environment, it is hoped that staff will treat trans students with dignity and respect in line with the school's anti-bullying policy.

10. Changing names

Changing their name and gender identity is a pivotal point for many trans people. Whilst it is expected that name changes will occur with parental consent, the school will take the lead from the student regarding their 'known as' name. If a trans pupil wishes to have their revised data recognised on school systems, this will be supported wherever possible. In circumstances where parental consent for a change of name is not given, the school will ensure that any communication home (e.g. report cards, letters, email correspondence) regarding the student uses their legal name.

More information on changing names on birth certificates can be found at:

www.deedpoll.org.uk/CanABirthCertificateBeChanged.html

The school is required to ensure that an admission register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. For each student the school is required to record their legal full name and their sex; this should be the birth sex unless an individual has obtained a gender recognition certificate (not available under the age of 18).

In regard to schools recording this data, section 4.2.7 of the 'School census 2014 to 2015' (2015) Department for Education guidance indicates that the gender of a pupil is recorded in the format of male or female. However, "In exceptional circumstances, a school may be unsure as to which gender should be recorded for a particular pupil. Where this occurs, gender is recorded according to the wishes of the pupil and/or parent."

Exam Certification

Technically, students can be entered under any name with an Examination Board. However, it is a very complex matter. Once a result is accredited it will need to be linked with a Unique Pupil Number (UPN) or Unique Learner Number (ULN) which existed in the school census information submitted in January of the examination year. UPNs and ULNs are only linked with legal names, not preferred names.

It is possible for examination certificates to be issued in the preferred name, but any young person finding themselves in this position should discuss this issue with Severn Vale School and parents /guardians to agree on the best way forward. In all cases there must be close consultation with the various Examination Boards prior to starting GCSE courses.

Support organisations listed in the resources section will have more information about changing names. A person under 16 years cannot change their name legally without the consent of a parent and simply changing name does not change a legal gender identity.

*Legal Name refers to the name in which a pupil or student arrives in education for the first time; this is often the name on their birth certificate.

11.Pronouns

Using pronouns (other than those that are sex-based) may be problematic. Some people do not accept that a person can change their sex, and so, they believe that pronouns should reflect a person's biological sex. There is conflict at times, in wanting to support the trans person but rejecting the idea of compelled speech.

The school, in discussion with the student and their parents, will change the student's pronouns if they are confident it will benefit the individual. Any changes will be communicated to the relevant staff. As a matter of fairness, respect and inclusion, it is hoped that staff ensure that the new pronoun is used uniformly to address the student.

Sometimes people use the incorrect pronoun, first name or gender identifier in a deliberate attempt to bully or belittle a student. This will not be tolerated. Transphobic incidents will be recorded and dealt with in the same manner as other incidents that are motivated by prejudice or hate. However, there is a difference between malicious deeds and honest mistakes and thorough investigation is necessary to ascertain the truth.

In circumstances where parental consent is not given, the school reserves the right to take the lead from the student regarding their use of pronouns as long as the school is confident it will benefit the individual. In circumstances where parental consent for a change of pronouns is not given, the school will ensure that

any communication home (e.g. report cards, letters, email correspondence) regarding the student uses their biological pronouns.

12. Absence

The school will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate absence requests for treatment and support from external sources in line with our Attendance Policy. The absence must be requested in advance by the parents/guardians. Sensitive care will be taken when recording the reason for absence.

13. Uniform

Transgender students who wish to socially transition will be expected to follow the School's Uniform Policy. The school has a gender-neutral uniform and will allow the student to wear the uniform of the gender with which they identify when appropriate.

14. PE Provision

PE is a key aspect of the national curriculum and the physical and mental well-being of young people. PE develops students' competence and confidence to take part in a range of physical activities that become a central part of their lives, both in and out of school. A young transgender person has the same right to PE as other young people.

There may be sports where, as puberty develops, M2F transgender participants may have a physical advantage over other girls but this should not present a problem within a carefully and sensitively managed lesson context. The issue of physical risk within certain sports should also be managed properly within the lesson context rather than preventing young transgender people from participating (which would be discriminatory).

It may be that due to the nature of contact and physicality of sports such as rugby, the school would consider whether a transgender person participating in full contact lessons is appropriate towards the latter stages of puberty. This is something that the school will take a view on prior to the delivery of those lessons, in discussion with parents or guardians and the Subject leader for PE.

When a student begins their transition, the school will decide, in consultation with the student and parents, which gender PE class is most appropriate. This preference may change during an academic year or at some point in their school life. The school will keep an open dialogue with students and parents to review PE provision.

15. Toilets and Changing Facilities

Students have the right to access the toilet that corresponds to their gender identity. Any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, will be provided access to a single stall toilet, but no student shall be required to use such a toilet.

There are several gender-neutral disabled toilets on the school site which can be used by transgender students. After consultation with both the child and parents/guardians, a toilet pass will be given to access the most appropriate facilities.

When at another school or outside venue, school staff will try to ensure there is appropriate sensitive provision available.

16.The Curriculum

At Severn Vale School, students have Futures lessons where they learn about many important aspects of life which will play a key role in equipping them with the skills needed to succeed both inside and outside of school. The curriculum and Futures scheme of work is updated annually and written in guidance with statutory legislation.

Futures lessons from Year 9 onwards will specifically address topics regarding identity, diversity and sex, with the theme of building healthy relationships throughout the whole curriculum. There is no explicit teaching of trans issues, however, the students will be made aware that gender reassignment is a protected characteristic - this will be taught in an age sensitive and factual manner. Within this framework, students will be encouraged to learn about the importance of tolerance, inclusion, equality and embracing difference.

To promote inclusivity and diversity, LGBTQ+ issues and celebrations are also mentioned on key dates within the morning line-up messages.

17.School trips involving overnight stays

Learning about different cultures and lives and taking part in activities may lead to overnight stays, both at home and abroad. Issues may arise for both young transgender students and other students but this must not mean transgender students cannot be included on the visit.

The school will give consideration well in advance of any additional needs which may include having a parent or guardian (or member of staff) accompanying the visit to ensure the transgender student is fully included. The sleeping arrangements will be considered before a visit is undertaken. Each individual case and visit needs to be considered separately and in-depth discussions will happen well in advance, with all appropriate bodies, linked to the accommodation available. Students and or parents who have queries or concerns can direct these to the relevant trip leader in advance.

There are countries that are not as legally and culturally open as the UK. In fact, some have laws that make it illegal to be part of the transgender community. Some countries even make it an offence not to report to the authorities that someone is part of the transgender community. The school will consider and investigate the laws regarding transgender communities in any country considered for a school visit.

Appendices

Legislation

Legislation which informs the practices within this policy include the:

Data Protection Act 1998 (UK)

Information about a person's Transgender status is considered 'sensitive personal data' and is subject to tighter controls than other personal data. Explicit consent is required before it can be processed.

- Personal data must be looked after properly following the eight data protection principles, which include ensuring personal data is accurate, secure and processed fairly and lawfully.
- Failure to change a person's title, name and gender when requested could lead to the following offences under the Act.
- Disclosure of personal information that is used, held or disclosed unfairly, or without proper security
- Failure to ensure personal information is accurate and up to date
- Processing of data likely to cause distress to the individual

The Human Rights Act 1998

The following Articles from The Human Rights Act 1998 support the rights and needs of Transgender people to live their lives in their true gender.

- Article 8: right to respect for private life and family life
- Article 10: freedom of expression
- Article 14: the prohibition of discrimination

The Gender Recognition Act 2004

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 is mainly concerned with the process by which a person can get a Gender Recognition Certificate and correct their original birth certificate to match their true gender. This can only occur after a person reaches 18 years of age but is something that many younger people may aspire to.

Equality Act 2010 (Great Britain)

The Equality Act 2010 ensures legal protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation (direct or indirect) for everyone under the nine protected characteristics defined in the Act, one of which is Gender Reassignment (also known as Transgender). Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that the Act specifically refers to School and young people. The Equality Act 2010 (2:1:7) states that: 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 reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. The Act applies to employment, education and a range of other areas where discrimination may take place.

In order to be protected under the Act, a student will not necessarily have to be undergoing a medical procedure to change their sex, but they must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender or be proposing to do so. The school governing body has a responsibility to ensure that the school is complying with its requirements under the Equality Act.

18.Resources

The external links listed below is not an exhaustive list of resources that are available to support young trans people, their families and professionals working with them. They are merely a guide to the range of resources available and should at all times be assessed and screened for their appropriateness and validity.

It should be noted that the content of external websites and other resources, sometimes vary over time. Therefore, the content of these resources may need checking periodically to ensure that they are current and remain suitable.

Equality & Human Rights Commission - [Attitudes to transgender people \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Gender Recognition Certificate - [Apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/apply-for-a-gender-recognition-certificate)

The Tavistock and Portman Clinic - [Tavistock and Portman - Providing specialist mental health care, education and research](https://www.tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/)

For children and young people up to the age of 18 and their families experiencing difficulties in the development of their gender identity including children unhappy with their biological sex.

Mermaids - [Homepage - Mermaids \(mermaidsuk.org.uk\)](https://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/)

Family and Individual Support for Teenagers and Children with Gender Identity Issues

Gender Identity Research & Education Society - [Gender Identity Research & Education Society – Improving the Lives of Trans People \(gires.org.uk\)](https://www.gires.org.uk/)

A UK wide organisation whose purpose is to improve the lives of trans and gender diverse people of all ages, including those who are non-binary and non-gender.

Gendered Intelligence - [Gendered Intelligence](https://www.genderedintelligence.org.uk/)

Gendered Intelligence is a trans-led and trans-involving charity that works to increase understandings of gender diversity and improve the lives of trans people.

Transgender Trend - [Transgender Trend – Who Are We?](https://www.transgendertrend.org.uk/)

An organisation which questions the trans narrative and medical interventions of children. They offer support and resources for children, parents and teachers.