

Gender Identity Policy

Aims

COSST aims to provide a safe, friendly and supportive environment in which all pupils know that they are valued equally as individuals, and in which their personal wellbeing, social and academic needs are met in an atmosphere of mutual respect, toleration and support.

This policy aims to support pupils in relation to gender identity issues and to provide guidance to pupils, parents and staff as to how the schools will offer this support. It also aims to help raise awareness of gender issues as part of pupils' preparation for their future, both within and beyond our schools.

Principles

Gender reassignment is a Protected Characteristic under the 2010 Equality Act, which states: '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.'

Except under specific circumstances, usually of a medical nature, an application for a gender recognition certificate can only be made from 18 years of age. Whilst this policy includes guidance on how a pupil will be supported through gender reassignment, COSST recognises that under most circumstances pupils will be considering, or preparing for, gender reassignment rather than undergoing it during their time at school.

Therefore, whilst this policy provides guidance for the support of pupils who are in physical transition, the emphasis is on pastoral support for gender identity matters and for those considering and preparing for gender reassignment.

The gender identities covered include transgender (i.e. the gender does not align with that which was assigned at birth); non-binary (the individual does not identify as wholly male or wholly female); and gender fluid (the individual identifies as male at one time, female at another).

Legally, a birth certificate can only be changed through an appropriate application. This means that in certain formal situations (e.g. census information, statutory assessments), the school will need to continue to use the gender and birth name of any pupil. This does not alter the guiding principles of this policy.

The well-being, happiness and safety of the pupil is paramount, and at all times the schools will seek to work with the pupil to ensure that the support provided is well-informed, flexible and clear.

Support of Pupils

COSST would always wish to be informed of gender identity issues so that it can support the pupil concerned, both personally and within the community. This might come about through disclosure from the pupil to a member of staff, information from the parents of the pupil involved, or information provided when the pupil joins the school.

The schools will treat any such information in the strictest confidence, as it would any personal and sensitive information. Information would only be revealed with the prior agreement of the individual involved, or if the safety and vital interests of the individual would otherwise be harmed. It follows that the schools expect all information relating to a pupil's circumstances to be treated confidentially and sensitively by all those in the schools' community.

Full support will be given from the schools, including, but not exclusively, the child's class teacher, Head of School or Executive Headteacher, phase leader and School Nurse. This includes all matters relating to gender identity.

The schools are responsible for ensuring that individual pupils, including those involved with matters of gender identity, continue to feel safe and happy within the school community. This is an important part of the support provided. Individuals will be consulted and their agreement obtained if the schools consider that information needs to be shared in order to ensure that the community, or parts of the community, remain a safe and happy environment for the individual pupil.

We would expect parents to be aware of gender identity issues and, typically, fully involved in providing support.

We shall support and discuss gender identity issues with pupils and engage with outside agencies in order to provide the best possible support for a pupil who is reaching decisions regarding gender identity.

The schools do not tolerate transphobic harassment, and such behaviour will be dealt with in the same way as any other form of bullying, as set out in the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Procedures for Providing Support with Gender Transition

COSST recognises that a pupil may take the decision to transition gender during their time at school. The schools would ask that they are notified of any such decision formally, and with sufficient advance notice, so that it can provide the necessary support.

The gender transition may not involve any change in physical appearance during the pupil's time at school. However, the schools still need to be notified and to ensure the appropriate support and practical arrangements associated with such a decision.

A small group of staff will then assess the circumstances, under the supervision of the Executive Headteacher or Head of School. The pupil, and under normal circumstances the parents or carers of the pupil, will be consulted during this process to allow the pupil to reflect on the decision and how the school can best support it. The age and circumstances of the pupil, as well as the advice of outside agencies, are likely to be taken into consideration during this process.

The group, in conjunction with the pupil, and the parents or carers, will consider and determine the on-going pastoral support needed, including possible involvement of outside agencies. Pastoral support will include, though not be limited to, (a) consideration of the understanding of the wider community, (b) how the pupil is to be addressed, including with respect to pronouns (for example he, she, ze), and (c) curriculum (including PSHE).

The group, in conjunction with the pupil, and normally the parents, will consider and determine the practical arrangements necessary. These are likely to include, but are not limited to, uniform, toilet facilities, sports options, changing facilities and arrangements on trips involving overnight stays.

The support described is designed to allow on-going flexibility of approach, in the knowledge that all gender identity matters are individual. Consultation and discussion with the individual pupil will remain central at all times.

Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy and its implementation will be carried out by the Executive Headteacher, taking account of information provided by the staff. The Senior Leadership Team will review annually the effectiveness of the policy.

