



January 2024

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about transgender guidance for schools. I know that the number of children and young people questioning their gender identity and experiencing gender distress has become a growing challenge for parents, teachers, and schools.

This is a complex and sensitive subject for schools to navigate. That is why, for the first time, the Department for Education, working closely with the Government's Equality Hub, has worked to produce guidance to provide clarity for schools and colleges, and reassurance for parents. The safety and wellbeing of children has always been the Government's primary concern which is why their safety and wellbeing is at the heart of this draft guidance.

The guidance provides clarity on how to approach a range of issues when it comes to supporting gender questioning children and responding to requests for changes known as 'social transition'. This includes changing pronouns, sport, single-sex schools and single-sex spaces. The guidance will assist teachers in ensuring that they are acting in the best interests of children.

This guidance has been developed with the expert clinical view and interim conclusions from the Cass Review in mind. That review set out that social transition is not a neutral act, and that better information is needed about the outcomes for children who undertake degrees of social transition. It also set out that it could have significant psychological effects on a young person.

In recognition of this, proper use of this guidance means social transition, in practice, should be extremely rare when the appropriate safeguards are put in place and the child's best interest taken into account. Importantly, the guidance places beyond doubt the fundamental principle that parents should be involved in decisions about their children's lives, and that significant decisions affecting a child's future should not be taken without parents being involved.



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In regard to single-sex spaces and sports, the Government sets out the principle that biological sex is fundamentally important when it comes to protecting safety and ensuring fairness in competitive sports.

The draft guidance is now subject to public consultation until 12th March. Parents, teachers, and school leaders are encouraged to respond. You can respond here:

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender-questioning-children-proposed-guidance/>

The guidance will not cover what pupils should be taught about gender reassignment, as this is being considered as part of the review on the Relationships, Sex and Health Education statutory guidance. The Department will publish a separate consultation on an amended draft of the statutory guidance at the earliest opportunity.

The draft guidance clarifies that schools and colleges do not have to, and should not, accept all requests for social transition. Where a school considers a request, they should take a very cautious approach, including watchful waiting periods, and ensuring parents are fully consulted before any decision is taken.

From the outset, schools and colleges should also consider the context and seriousness of the request including whether social influence is involved. In exceptional cases where a request to social transition is agreed, children, teachers or staff at a school should not be required to adopt the use of preferred pronouns and there must be no sanction, verbal or otherwise. Where a teacher or child does not adopt the new pronouns, they should use the child's preferred name. Schools should ensure that bullying is never tolerated.

Where safety is a consideration – for example in physical sport or single-sex spaces – the guidance is categorical that it must never be compromised by allowing a child of the opposite sex to participate in those activities or use those facilities. Schools should also make sure competitive sport is fair, which will almost always mean separate sports for boys and girls especially in older cohorts. The guidance also reaffirms that single-sex schools can refuse to admit pupils of the opposite sex, regardless of whether they are questioning their gender.



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Thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY