

Northwick Park Multi Academy Trust

Transgender Policy

September 2018

Introduction

Northwick Park aims to ensure a supportive, respectful environment for all members of our school and the wider community.

Gender is often an important part of an individual's identity and developing a positive sense of gender identity is part of growing up. However, gender identity is often complex and there is a spectrum of gender which is wider than just boy/man or girl/woman.

Practice to support any transgender pupils 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. This policy seeks to provide a broad overview of the needs of transgender pupils and their families.

Training will be provided for staff annually and as required throughout the year, so that all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to children with gender issues.

Principles

In developing practice to support transgender pupils, we aim to follow these principles:

- Listen to the pupil, their parents, carers and siblings. Wherever possible follow their lead and preferences.
- No pupil should be made to feel that they are the ones who are causing problems or that they owe anything to their school in return for being treated with the equality they deserve and are legally entitled to.
- Avoid seeing the pupil as a problem and instead see an opportunity to enrich the school community and to challenge gender stereotypes and norms on a wider scale.
- Avoid where possible gender segregated activities and where this cannot be avoided; allow the pupil to access the activity that corresponds to their gender identity.
- Challenge bullying and discrimination.
- Promote positive attitudes to gender diversity by including transgender issues within activities relating to discrimination, hate crime, diversity, inclusion, SRE and PSHE.

Legislation

- Legislation that informs the participation of trans pupils in schools include the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010

- The Trans Gender Bill of Human Rights 2016

Dealing with the questions of staff, children, families and the wider community

There may be many questions that are asked by various people and it is important to be as clear and informative as possible. However, every circumstance is different, due to the unique experience of individual children and their families. Any difficulties/issues should be referred to the Headteacher or member of staff responsible for Transgender Policy in school (A.Hyde). The Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) have produced some helpful training tools which can be used in school. Staff and governors can also use the materials as part of their Continuing Professional Development. The resources can be found at;

<http://www.gires.org.uk/education/information-for-educators>

Terminology and language

The correct terminology and language should be used and in order to do this there may need to be some training for staff to ensure clarity regarding the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity. For the matter of fairness and inclusion it is extremely important that the correct gender, name and pronouns are used correctly to address transgender pupils.

Names and pronoun change

Respecting a pupil's request to change name and pronoun is crucial in supporting and validating that pupil's identity. Some transgender pupils and young people may wish to change their name to make it in line with their chosen identity. Although they may not have changed their name legally, individuals have the right to choose the name by which they are known to by staff and fellow pupils. More information on changing names on birth certificates can be found at:

www.deedpoll.org.uk/CanABirthCertificateBeChanged.html

Support/Early Help Process

It is important that any support offered to a transgender pupil starts with identifying their individual needs. It must be understood that some transgender pupils may not want any special treatment. Some may choose to be known by a different name or to wear different clothes. However, most transgender pupils (and their families) will need some expert/ specialist support as they grow up and develop. We will work with families to support them to access further services. Transgender pupils may have personal requests regarding a range of issues which will be discussed with the pupil and family as appropriate and all efforts will be made to meet these needs. These may include: Physical Education, changing facilities, swimming lessons, toilet facilities, school uniform etc.

Transphobia and Bullying

We have a robust anti-bullying policy in place. In line with this policy, transphobia incidents will be recorded and dealt with in the same manner as other incidents that are motivated by prejudice, e.g. racist or homophobic incidents.

Confidentiality

Confidential information about pupils will not be shared with other parents. The following suggested suitable response for staff to offer should they be asked questions in relation to transgender issues: "We value all our pupils and care for them, whatever their personal circumstances. Our main job is to give them a good education in a happy school environment. That is what we are focusing on, and we would ask everyone to respect the privacy of all our pupils."

Staff must know their duties and responsibilities around data protection so that they fully understand why information is protected, and when, how and to whom certain information can be released.

Managing specific issues

Uniform

As for any other child, trans children should be expected to follow the school uniform policy. At Northwick Park and Leigh Beck, both male and female can wear skirts and/or trousers if they prefer. Depending on the individual, the choice to begin dressing in the clothes associated with one's chosen gender can be a very big step and potentially very daunting. This can often represent one of the earliest stages of transition and is a profound statement of acceptance of one's identity and commitment to it. In doing so though, these children are making themselves more visibly different from much of the school community and effectively 'outing' themselves to the rest of the school as trans. Care must be taken to ensure that trans identified children are supported fully during this time. A pupil who identifies as a trans girl but was born a genetic male is not a 'boy dressed as a girl' but is a girl. By allowing a trans child to dress in clothes which they feel comfortable with, schools empower them to express themselves by bringing their outward appearance in line with that of their internal gender identity at that point in time.

Physical Education

Participating in PE and games is important to the physical and mental wellbeing of pupils and the National Curriculum has included it as a key aspect of school provision. A young trans person has the same right to access physical education as their peers and also to take part in competitive sports. There should be few barriers in the way of a young trans person from being fully involved in PE. In regards to getting changed, various spaces are available to all pupils. If there is a trans child, school will ensure that there is a discreet area that is private and safe. If children are binding their chests, school staff monitor them carefully during particularly physical activities and in hot weather. There is a chance that the binding could cause discomfort or even impair breathing. It may be necessary to subtly offer more breaks.

Competitive School Sports

Female to Male trans children wouldn't gain any physical advantage in some sports so there should be no issues in their participation (except those sports where there may be an issue regarding physical risk in high contact sports. In this case, a school would need to carefully consider its approach). It is a little more complicated in regards to Male to Female children as they get older regarding participation in competitive sport. In some instances, there may be a physical advantage gained in some sports, but, as stated above, all young people develop at different rates. School will take a common sense approach, considering each case individually.

Toilets and Changing Facilities

Toilets and changing facilities are often deemed the most sensitive of all the issues and there is much debate around the inclusion of trans children in gender segregated facilities. Concerns usually stem from a worry that a trans child may find themselves in a vulnerable position and may be subject to transphobic bullying or unwanted attention that has the potential to escalate to something more serious such as physical or emotional harm. Equally, such children want to be able to 'pass' as their true gender and want to be seen and treated as such. Trans children should be able to use the facilities of their preferred gender. This is often seen as a way of 'passing'. If a child or young person isn't comfortable with using these facilities, then a unisex/ accessible toilet/ changing area should also be provided. Arrangements regarding use of toilet facilities will be discussed with individual children, where appropriate, to identify their preference.

When trans children are representing the school at competitions, school staff will check changing facilities to ensure that they are safe and appropriate and necessary provisions must be made if they are not of an appropriate standard. A situation where a trans child or young person is visiting your school as part of a team also requires thought and sensitivity. It would have a harmful effect on a young trans person if showering and changing facilities are not private and dignified.

Swimming

The local swimming pool has communal facilities, making it suitable for all pupils to maintain their privacy whilst changing, without gender specific areas. Trans children will be allowed to wear swimming shorts and a rash vest in the pool.

Relationship and sex education

As this is carried out in gender specific groups, the delivery of appropriate content to trans children will be carefully considered, in collaboration with parents/carers to ensure that essential information is given in the most appropriate way.

School Residential

Year 6 attend a residential activity. All children in Y6 have the opportunity to be included in this event. Consideration should be given well in advance to any additional needs and discussion should involve the young child and their parents/ carers. Northwick Park Primary and Nursery Academy is committed to keeping our children safe. The sleeping arrangements will be thought about before the trip is undertaken; it is possible that the student would prefer to have a separate room. Each individual case and trip will be considered and in depth discussions should be held in advance with any and all appropriate bodies.

Resources and Further Support

- Tavistock and Portman Clinic- Gender Identity Development Service
www.tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/childrenyoungpeoplegenderidentityissues
- Mermaids- Family and Individual Support for Teenagers and Children with Gender Identity Issues
www.mermaidsuk.org.uk
- Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) www.gires.org.uk
- Press for Change- The UK's Leading Expert in Transgender Law www.pfc.org.uk
- Equality Advisory Service www.equalityadvisoryservice.com