

Staffordshire University Academy		Academy Policy Document			
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Gender Questioning and Transgender Policy

Academy Aims

This policy establishes Staffordshire University Academy's approach to supporting students who are questioning their gender and transgender students. SUA is committed to a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which all students are treated with dignity. The academy will act in accordance with safeguarding duties, equality and human-rights law, current Department for Education statutory guidance and the rights, safety, privacy and dignity of other students.

SUA will not initiate social transition. Where a student or their parent/carer asks the academy to make a change or provide support relating to social transition, the request will be considered carefully and individually through the process set out in this policy.

- Ensure staff and Local Academy Council members respond to gender-questioning and transgender matters sensitively, respectfully and lawfully.
- Provide appropriate pastoral and safeguarding support for students who are questioning their gender.
- Protect students from bullying, harassment and prejudice-based abuse.
- Maintain open and honest communication with parents/carers, subject to safeguarding exceptions determined by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Ensure requests for social-transition support are considered by appropriate senior leaders and are not implemented independently by individual members of staff.

What do we mean by transgender and gender-questioning children and young people?

A gender-questioning child is a child who is questioning how they feel about being a boy or a girl, including the physical attributes of their sex and the social expectations associated with it. Some children may describe themselves as transgender or use other language to describe their feelings.

A child who is questioning their gender may or may not continue to experience those feelings over time. Staff should listen carefully, avoid assumptions or leading questions and remain professionally curious about the whole range of factors affecting the student.

Gender dysphoria is a clinical term. Academy staff do not diagnose gender dysphoria and do not provide medical or clinical advice. Clinical assessment and treatment are matters for appropriately qualified healthcare professionals.

For this policy, social transition means a request for the academy to make changes or put support in place so that a child presents socially as the opposite biological sex. This can include requests concerning names, pronouns, uniform or other day-to-day arrangements.

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

The academy will comply with its legal obligations and have regard to current statutory guidance, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026), including its guidance on children who are questioning their gender.
- Education Act 2002 and the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

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- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Equality Act 2010, including sex, gender reassignment, religion or belief and sexual orientation, and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- School Premises (England) Regulations 2012.
- Gender Recognition Act 2004. A Gender Recognition Certificate is not available to a person under 18.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance in force from 1 September 2026.
- For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC 16. For Equality Act 2010 purposes, the terms sex, man and woman refer to biological sex; protection from discrimination because of gender reassignment remains.

Gender identity is not itself a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Students may, however, be protected by the characteristic of gender reassignment. SUA will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

The Curriculum

Issues relating to sex, gender, relationships, equality and respect are taught through the academy curriculum, including CHARACTER / Personal Development and, where appropriate, other subject areas. Teaching will follow statutory RSE guidance, be age appropriate, factually accurate and balanced, and will distinguish clearly between biological sex and gender-related concepts.

Staff will deliver sensitive topics professionally and respectfully. The academy recognises that students and families may hold different lawful religious or philosophical beliefs and will ensure discussion remains respectful and does not become bullying or harassment.

Responding when a student raises questions about gender

A student may speak to a trusted member of staff about feelings relating to sex or gender. Staff should listen calmly and sensitively and must not diagnose, encourage or initiate social transition.

Where a student is discussing their feelings and does not ask the academy to change how they are treated, confidentiality will normally be respected unless a related safeguarding concern requires information to be shared.

Where a student or parent/carers asks SUA to make a change or provide support relating to social transition, the request must be referred to the designated senior leader and DSL. Individual staff must not make informal or unilateral arrangements.

Working with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers play a central role in their child's life. Where a student requests academy support with social transition, SUA will involve parents/carers as a matter of priority and give their views significant weight alongside the student's views, age and maturity and the academy's safeguarding duties.

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In the rare circumstances where involving parents/carers may create a greater safeguarding risk to the child than not involving them, the DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response before parents/carers are contacted or a decision is made. The rationale will be recorded.

Where appropriate, SUA will support a student to speak with their parents/carers, including through a trusted member of staff.

Considering a request for social-transition support

Any request will be considered on an individual basis. Supporting any element of social transition is an active decision by the academy and will not be automatic. The academy will consider what is in the best interests of the child and the impact of any decision on other children.

- The student's views, age, maturity and the nature, duration and consistency of the request
- Parent/carer views and involvement
- Any safeguarding concerns, vulnerabilities, SEND or neurodiversity and relevant pastoral context
- Relevant clinical or professional information where available
- The academy's Equality Act and Human Rights Act duties, including the rights of others
- Privacy, dignity, safety, fairness and the practical impact of agreeing or refusing the request
- Whether another arrangement could meet the same need with less impact on the student or others.

The decision and reasons will be recorded using Appendix 2. Arrangements will be reviewed at an agreed date and sooner where circumstances change, new safeguarding information emerges, an arrangement is no longer workable or the student wishes to change or reverse an earlier request.

Physical Education

Sport and PE are important aspects of the curriculum and support physical and mental wellbeing. SUA will seek to enable every student to participate meaningfully and safely.

PE and sporting activities may be organised by biological sex where necessary or appropriate for safety or fairness. Where single-sex grouping is necessary for safety, a student will not participate in the opposite-sex group. An appropriate alternative will be considered where possible.

Where safety does not require sex-separated provision, requests will be considered individually, taking account of fairness, inclusion, the nature of the activity and the academy's duties under the Equality Act 2010. Competitive sport and academy representation will also follow the rules of the relevant governing body and current law.

Changing / Toilet Facilities

Students of one biological sex are not permitted to use toilets, changing rooms or shower facilities designated for the opposite biological sex.

Students aged 11 or over will not be permitted to undress or change in front of students of the opposite biological sex. Where a student does not wish to use facilities designated for their biological sex, SUA will consider whether an appropriate alternative, such as a fully enclosed single-user facility or another private arrangement, can reasonably be provided without compromising required single-sex provision.

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Any arrangement will protect the safety, privacy and dignity of the individual student and other students and will be recorded in Appendix 2.

Academy Uniform

Students in Years 7 to 11 are expected to follow the academy Uniform Policy. SUA's uniform allows students to wear the approved skirt or trousers and the approved PE kit options. Students are not required to dress according to sex stereotypes.

Any additional request relating to uniform as part of social transition will be considered through the academy decision-making process and recorded in Appendix 2.

Pronouns

A request for staff or students to use pronouns different from those associated with a student's biological sex is a request relating to social transition and will be considered through the academy process. It will not be implemented independently by individual members of staff.

SUA will also recognise the lawful rights of students and staff in relation to religion or belief. No student or member of staff will be permitted to bully, harass or deliberately humiliate another person. Where appropriate, using a student's agreed name rather than pronouns may provide a respectful practical arrangement.

Name Changing and Exams

A request for SUA to use a different name as part of social transition will be considered through the process in this policy. Any agreed informal name must not result in inaccurate statutory, safeguarding or other official records where legal name or biological sex is required.

A person under 16 cannot formally change their name without the involvement of a person with parental responsibility. SUA will seek appropriate evidence for any legal name change and consider the individual family-law circumstances where relevant.

Examination entries and certificates will be managed in accordance with current awarding-body and Joint Council for Qualifications requirements. Proposed changes should be discussed with the examinations team and parents/carers well before entries are made. SUA will ensure statutory identifiers, safeguarding records and other official records remain accurate.

Vaccinations and Medical Care

Vaccinations and medical care are matters for healthcare professionals. Where a vaccination programme or medical appointment is relevant to biological sex, SUA will ensure correct information is available to authorised healthcare professionals while protecting the student's privacy as far as possible.

Where appropriate, the academy will work with the family and healthcare provider to identify a sensitive arrangement that avoids unnecessary embarrassment or distress.

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Academy Visits

SUA is committed to including gender-questioning and transgender students in educational visits wherever reasonably possible. Planning will consider travel documentation, medical needs, local laws, safeguarding, privacy and accommodation arrangements.

For residential and overnight visits, students will not share sleeping accommodation with students of the opposite biological sex. Where a student does not wish to share accommodation designated for their biological sex, the academy will seek a suitable alternative arrangement where reasonably possible.

For visits abroad, SUA will consider relevant laws and cultural expectations in the destination country and complete an appropriate risk assessment. Families may also be advised to check travel-document and border requirements.

Vulnerability

Being gender-questioning or transgender is not, by itself, a mental health condition. Some students may nevertheless experience distress, bullying, family difficulty, anxiety or other wellbeing concerns. Staff should remain alert to signs of vulnerability and follow normal safeguarding procedures where concerns arise.

Pastoral support may include a trusted adult, regular check-ins, anti-bullying support, SEND support where relevant and signposting to appropriate NHS or other professional services. The academy will not provide clinical diagnosis or treatment.

Academy Attendance

SUA will manage attendance in accordance with the academy Attendance Policy and current national attendance guidance. Medical appointments will be recorded using the appropriate attendance code and evidence requirements.

Sensitive information about the reason for an absence will only be recorded or shared where necessary for lawful attendance administration, safeguarding or student welfare. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required by law.

Transphobia and Bullying

SUA has a robust approach to bullying and prejudice-based incidents. Transphobic bullying, and bullying or harassment relating to sex, gender reassignment, perceived gender identity, gender non-conformity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, will be challenged and dealt with under the academy Behaviour, Anti-Bullying and Safeguarding policies.

A lawful difference of opinion or a protected religious or philosophical belief is not, by itself, bullying. SUA will consider context, intent, impact and repetition and will act where behaviour amounts to harassment, intimidation, abuse or targeted hostility.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Information relating to a student's gender questioning, agreed support arrangements and safeguarding needs will be treated as sensitive personal information. It will be stored securely and

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shared only with those who need the information for safeguarding, welfare, lawful administration or implementation of an agreed plan.

Biological sex will be recorded accurately wherever sex is required to be recorded. Relevant staff will know a student's biological sex where necessary for safeguarding, facilities, sport, medical needs, residential arrangements or other lawful purposes.

Roles and Responsibilities

Local Academy Council: Oversees the policy and seeks assurance that it is implemented lawfully and consistently.

Principal: Has overall responsibility for implementation of this policy.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Advises on safeguarding, information sharing and any exception to normal parental involvement.

Assistant Principal - Behaviour and Attitudes / designated senior leader: Coordinates requests, records decisions and reviews individual arrangements.

SENCO: Provides advice where SEND or neurodiversity may affect support needs or the context of a request.

All staff: Listen sensitively, challenge bullying, maintain appropriate confidentiality, follow safeguarding procedures and do not independently initiate or implement social-transition changes.

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Appendix 1 - Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning in this policy
Biological sex	A person's sex. For Equality Act 2010 purposes, sex refers to biological sex.
Gender questioning	A child who is questioning how they feel about being a boy or a girl, including the physical attributes of their sex and social expectations associated with it.
Gender reassignment	A protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
Social transition	Changes requested in how a child presents socially, which may include a name, pronouns, uniform or other day-to-day arrangements.
Transgender	A term some people use where their gender identity differs from their biological sex.
Gender dysphoria	A clinical term relating to distress associated with incongruence between sex and gender identity. Diagnosis is a matter for appropriately qualified healthcare professionals.
Gender Recognition Certificate	A certificate under the Gender Recognition Act 2004. It is not available to a person under 18.

Appendix 2 - Gender-Questioning Support and Decision Record

This record replaces the previous individualised transgender / gender-questioning agreement. It is used when a student or parent/carer asks SUA to make a change or provide support relating to social transition. It must be completed by the designated senior leader with DSL involvement, stored securely and reviewed at the agreed date or sooner if circumstances change.

A. Student details

Legal name	
Known / requested name (if applicable)	
Date of birth	
Year group / tutor group	
Biological sex	Female / Male
Date request received	

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B. Request and student voice

What change(s) or support are requested?	
Who made the request?	Student / Parent-carer / Both / Other
Student's views and desired outcome	
How long has the student expressed this request?	
Relevant history or previous arrangements	

C. Parent / carer involvement

Parents/carers involved as a matter of priority	Yes / No
If no, has the DSL identified a greater safeguarding risk from parental involvement?	Yes / No / N/A
DSL rationale where parental involvement is delayed or restricted	
Parent/carers views	
Support offered to help the student speak with parents/carers	

D. Safeguarding and contextual assessment

Factor	Relevant?	Evidence / notes
Safeguarding concerns	Yes / No	
Mental health / wellbeing needs	Yes / No	
SEND / neurodiversity	Yes / No	
Bullying / peer relationships	Yes / No	
Family circumstances	Yes / No	

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Factor	Relevant?	Evidence / notes
Relevant clinical / professional information available	Yes / No	
Age, maturity, duration and consistency of request	Yes / No	
Impact on other students / privacy / dignity	Yes / No	
Other relevant information	Yes / No	

E. Legal and practical boundaries explained

- [] Students are not permitted to use toilets, changing rooms or showers designated for the opposite biological sex.
- [] Students aged 11 or over will not undress or change in front of students of the opposite biological sex.
- [] Students will not share overnight accommodation with students of the opposite biological sex.
- [] Where single-sex PE or sport grouping is necessary for safety, participation will be based on biological sex.
- [] Biological sex will continue to be recorded accurately wherever sex is required to be recorded.
- [] Bullying and harassment will be challenged while the lawful rights of pupils and staff, including religion or belief, are respected.

F. Decision and agreed arrangements

Area	Decision	Details / rationale
Name used informally	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
Pronouns / use of name instead	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
Uniform	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
Toilet facilities	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
Changing facilities	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
PE / sport	Agree / Refuse / N/A	

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Area	Decision	Details / rationale
Residential visits	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
Academy systems / records	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
Pastoral support	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
Information sharing - who needs to know?	Agree / Refuse / N/A	
Other arrangement	Agree / Refuse / N/A	

G. Decision rationale and proportionality

Record why the agreed outcome is in the student's best interests, how the views of parents/carers and the student were considered, the impact on other students, relevant equality and human-rights considerations, and whether a less intrusive alternative could meet the same aim.

Decision rationale:
Alternative arrangements considered:
Any dissenting views / unresolved issues:

H. Approval and review

Decision maker - name / role	
DSL - name	
Student informed	Yes / No
Parent/carers informed	Yes / No / safeguarding exception
Date decision made	
Review date	
Earlier review triggers	Change in circumstances / safeguarding information / arrangement not workable / student changes or reverses request / other
Record storage location	

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Student signature (acknowledging discussion, not determining the academy decision):

_____ Date: _____

Parent/carer signature (where appropriate): _____ Date: _____

SUA representative signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3 - Staff Quick Reference

Situation	Staff response
Student talks about feelings only	Listen sensitively. Do not assume this is a request for social transition. Maintain appropriate confidentiality unless safeguarding requires information sharing.
Student asks for a new name, pronouns, uniform or another social-transition change	Do not implement independently. Refer the request to the designated senior leader and DSL.
Student asks staff not to tell parents	Do not promise secrecy. If social-transition support is requested, parents/carers are normally involved as a matter of priority. Refer any safeguarding concern to the DSL.
Bullying or harassment occurs	Challenge it, record it and follow the Behaviour / Anti-Bullying / Safeguarding procedures.
Question about toilets, changing, PE or residential accommodation	Do not make an informal exception. Follow this policy and refer to the designated senior leader where needed.
Staff are unsure	Seek advice from the DSL or designated senior leader before making or communicating a decision.

Information and Resources

The academy will prioritise current statutory, legal and clinical sources and review external links periodically.

- Department for Education - Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Department for Education - Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance (2026).
- Equality and Human Rights Commission - Equality Act guidance.
- NHS - current services and information for children and young people.
- SUA Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Equality Policy, SEND Policy, Attendance Policy and Educational Visits Policy.