



Storyybrook Gender Questioning and Social Transition Policy





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1. Policy statement

Storyybrook is committed to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which every child feels valued, listened to and supported.

The school recognises that some children may experience questions, concerns or uncertainty relating to their gender identity. Such experiences may be temporary, evolving or long term and can occur alongside a range of developmental, social, emotional and mental health needs.

As a specialist SEMH setting, Storyybrook recognises that children may present with complex and interconnected needs, including trauma, anxiety, neurodivergence, attachment difficulties, emotional distress, social vulnerability and previous adverse experiences. These factors may influence how children understand and express their identity and wellbeing.

The welfare and best interests of the child will be central to the school's decision-making. The school will approach matters relating to gender questioning and social transition with sensitivity, professional curiosity and appropriate safeguarding consideration, taking account of the rights, welfare and interests of the child and of other children who may be affected.

The school will not initiate or suggest social transition. Where a child or their parent or carer makes a request relating to social transition, the school will take a cautious and individualised approach. Requests will not be automatically approved or refused and no changes relating to social transition will be implemented by individual members of staff before the school has considered the request.

In considering a request, the school will take time to understand the child's individual circumstances, thoughts and feelings and will consider their age and developmental stage, welfare and best interests, safeguarding needs, wider vulnerabilities, family circumstances, the views of parents or carers, any relevant SEND or SEMH needs, the impact on other children, the school's legal duties and any relevant clinical advice that is available.

Particular caution will be exercised in relation to requests involving pre-pubertal children. Where available and appropriate, families will be encouraged to seek relevant clinical advice.

2. Purpose

This policy provides a framework for:

- supporting gender-questioning children
- promoting wellbeing and inclusion
- ensuring safeguarding responsibilities are met
- supporting staff decision-making
- ensuring consistent practice
- managing requests relating to social transition
- working effectively with families and external professionals





3. Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher will:

- oversee implementation of this policy
- ensure decisions are made in accordance with safeguarding and legal duties
- ensure staff receive appropriate guidance
- monitor individual support arrangements

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- oversee safeguarding aspects of gender-questioning cases
- ensure concerns are recorded appropriately
- liaise with external agencies where required
- advise staff and leaders regarding safeguarding risks

Staff will:

- follow this policy
- report concerns promptly
- maintain professional boundaries
- avoid making promises or commitments regarding social transition

Governors and the Proprietor will:

- provide strategic oversight
- review policy effectiveness
- monitor compliance with safeguarding and legal duties

4. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Independent School Standards
- Local safeguarding partnership procedures
- Education Act 2002
- Independent School Standards Regulations 2014

The school will keep this policy under review to reflect developments in legislation, guidance and case law.





5. Definitions

Gender questioning

A child who is exploring, questioning or expressing uncertainty regarding their gender identity.

Social transition

A request for the school to support social transition may include one or more of the following:

- use of a different name
- use of different pronouns
- changes to appearance or presentation
- requests relating to uniform
- requests relating to facilities
- requests regarding how the child is referred to by others

Social transition does not involve medical intervention.

6. Guiding principles

The school will:

- place the child's welfare at the centre of decision-making
- consider the rights, privacy, dignity and welfare of other pupils who may be affected by any arrangements put in place
- listen respectfully to children
- maintain professional curiosity
- consider each case individually
- involve parents and carers wherever appropriate
- ensure safeguarding remains paramount
- avoid assumptions or predetermined outcomes
- seek professional advice where required
- maintain accurate records
- review arrangements regularly

The school will comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998. Some children who are questioning their gender may have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment under the Equality Act 2010. The school will not unlawfully discriminate against, harass or victimise any pupil and will consider requests relating to social transition carefully and individually, taking account of the rights and interests of the child and of others who may be affected.

7. Safeguarding considerations

Gender questioning may arise alongside a range of factors including:

- SEMH needs





- autism and neurodivergence
- anxiety
- trauma
- attachment difficulties
- bullying
- social pressures
- online influences
- family circumstances
- mental health needs

The school recognises that some children may be vulnerable to influence, exploitation, coercion or harm online and offline.

Staff will consider whether any safeguarding concerns are present and whether additional support, assessment or intervention may be required.

Where safeguarding concerns exist, these will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school will consider the child's gender questioning within the context of their individual circumstances and wider needs. Staff will remain professionally curious about factors that may be affecting the child's wellbeing, while avoiding assumptions that gender questioning is itself evidence of a safeguarding concern or that any particular factor necessarily explains the child's feelings.

The school will not promise confidentiality where safeguarding concerns are identified.

Any bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation relating to a child's gender identity or gender questioning will be addressed in accordance with the school's Behaviour and Relationships Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy

8. Responding to a child who is questioning their gender

Where a child expresses concerns, uncertainty or wishes relating to their gender identity, staff will:

1. Listen calmly and respectfully.
2. Avoid making assumptions or promises.
3. Record the concern appropriately.
4. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Headteacher.
5. Consider safeguarding implications.
6. Consider the child's individual circumstances and needs.
7. Engage with parents or carers unless there is a safeguarding reason not to do so.
8. Seek professional advice where appropriate.
9. Develop a support plan where required.
10. Review arrangements regularly.

The school will seek to understand the child's experiences and support their wellbeing without





presuming any particular outcome.

Any request relating to social transition should be discussed with the DSL and Headteacher before arrangements are agreed or implemented.

Individual support plans

Where ongoing support is required, the school may develop an individual support plan.

This may include:

- identified needs
- agreed support strategies
- communication arrangements
- safeguarding considerations
- review dates
- responsibilities of staff and parents

Any agreed arrangements relating to social transition should be reviewed at least termly, or sooner if circumstances change.

9. Working with parents and carers

Storyybrook recognises the important role of parents and carers in supporting their child's welfare and wellbeing.

Parents and carers will be involved in discussions and decision-making relating to gender questioning and any request for social transition wherever possible. The school will seek to work openly and collaboratively with families, taking account of the child's individual circumstances, welfare and best interests.

Where a child asks a member of staff not to share information with their parents or carers, staff must not make an individual decision or promise confidentiality. The matter must be referred to the DSL, who will consider the child's wishes and circumstances alongside the school's safeguarding responsibilities and applicable information-sharing duties.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, decisions about sharing information with parents or carers will be made in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory safeguarding guidance. Where appropriate, advice will be sought from children's social care or other relevant safeguarding professionals.

Decisions regarding parental involvement and information sharing will be made on a case-by-case basis and recorded appropriately.

10. Names and pronouns

A request to use a different name or pronouns may constitute a request for social transition and will be considered in accordance with the principles and decision-making process set out in this policy.





Staff will not initiate a change of name or pronouns as part of social transition, or agree such a change independently, before the request has been considered by the school.

When considering a request, the school will take account of:

- the child's wishes and feelings
- the child's age and developmental stage
- the child's welfare and best interests
- safeguarding considerations and any identified vulnerabilities
- parental views and involvement
- any relevant SEND or SEMH needs
- relevant clinical or professional advice, where available
- the impact of agreeing or declining the request on the child and on others who may be affected
- the school's obligations under safeguarding, equality and human rights law.

Any agreed arrangements will be clearly recorded, communicated to relevant staff on a need-to-know basis and reviewed regularly. Agreement to a particular arrangement will not determine the outcome of any future request, which will be considered on its own circumstances.

11. Uniform, appearance and presentation

The school will seek to support children in ways that promote wellbeing, dignity and inclusion while maintaining appropriate school expectations.

Requests relating to uniform, appearance or presentation as part of social transition will be considered individually in accordance with the decision-making principles set out in this policy. The school will take account of the child's welfare and best interests, safeguarding, health and safety, age and developmental stage, parental views and involvement, any relevant SEND or SEMH needs, school expectations and the rights and interests of others who may be affected.

Any agreed exception or adjustment will be clearly recorded and reviewed where appropriate.

12. Toilets, changing facilities and single-sex spaces

Storybrook is committed to providing safe, suitable and dignified facilities for all pupils in accordance with safeguarding requirements and applicable legislation.

The school will maintain single-sex toilet and changing provision where required by law. Pupils will not be permitted to use toilet or changing facilities designated exclusively for the opposite biological sex where this would be contrary to the applicable statutory requirements.

In particular, pupils aged 8 and over will not use toilet facilities designated exclusively for the opposite biological sex. Where changing accommodation is required for pupils aged 11 and over, pupils will not be required or permitted to change with pupils of the opposite biological sex.





Where a child who is questioning their gender does not wish to use facilities designated for their biological sex, the school will consider whether suitable alternative arrangements can be provided. This may include access to an individual toilet or changing facility that can be secured from the inside, or other appropriate arrangements that maintain the child's privacy and dignity without compromising the provision of single-sex facilities.

Any alternative arrangements will be considered sensitively and individually, taking account of the child's welfare, safeguarding needs, privacy and dignity, the rights and privacy of other pupils, age and developmental stage, SEND or SEMH needs and the school's legal obligations.

Alternative arrangements will be recorded and reviewed where appropriate.

Physical education and sport

Storyybrook will seek to ensure that all pupils are able to participate safely and meaningfully in physical education and sport.

Where a sport or activity is separated by biological sex because this is necessary for the safety of pupils, pupils will participate in accordance with their biological sex and exceptions will not be made on the basis of gender identity or social transition.

Where separation by sex is not required for safety, requests relating to participation will be considered individually. The school will undertake a balanced consideration of relevant factors, including the child's welfare and inclusion, safeguarding, safety, fairness, the nature of the activity, the age and developmental stage of pupils and the rights and interests of other pupils.

Residential visits and overnight accommodation

Children of opposite biological sexes will not share sleeping accommodation on residential visits or other overnight school activities.

Where a child who is questioning their gender does not wish to share sleeping accommodation with children of their biological sex, the school will consider whether suitable alternative accommodation can be provided. Any alternative arrangement must maintain appropriate safeguarding, privacy and dignity for the child and for other pupils and must not result in children of opposite biological sexes sharing sleeping accommodation.

Arrangements for residential and overnight visits will be considered as part of the school's visit planning and risk assessment processes and will be recorded where individual arrangements are required.

13. Record keeping and confidentiality

The school will maintain appropriate records relating to discussions, decisions, support plans and reviews.

Records will be stored in accordance with data protection requirements and safeguarding procedures. Records may include discussions with the child, communications with parents or





carers, safeguarding considerations, risk assessments, relevant professional or clinical advice, decisions made, the reasons for those decisions and review outcomes.

Where a decision is made regarding a request for social transition, the school will record the factors considered, the decision reached, the reasons for the decision and any arrangements for review.

Information will only be shared where there is a lawful and appropriate reason to do so and with those who need the information for the purposes of safeguarding, supporting the child or implementing an agreed arrangement. Safeguarding information will be shared in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and statutory safeguarding guidance.

14. External agencies and professional advice

Where appropriate, the school may seek advice from:

- local authority services
- safeguarding professionals
- educational psychologists
- health professionals
- CAMHS
- other relevant agencies

Where a family has received relevant clinical advice, the school will take this into account when considering how best to support the child. Where appropriate and available, the school will encourage parents and carers to seek relevant clinical advice, particularly where a pre-pubertal child is requesting support with social transition.

Professional advice will inform, but not replace, school decision-making.

15. Monitoring and review

The Headteacher and DSL will monitor implementation of this policy.

Individual arrangements will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain in the best interests of the child.

The policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where changes in legislation, statutory guidance or safeguarding practice require.

Governors and the Proprietor will receive appropriate assurance regarding implementation of this policy through safeguarding and compliance monitoring arrangements.

16. Related policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy





- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Educational Visits Policy

