

A request for support with social transition: a checklist

For designated safeguarding leads and school leaders in England. Based on *Keeping children safe in education 2026* (KCSIE). Numbers in brackets are KCSIE paragraphs. Tick each item as the school works through it.

MUST the law requires it **SHOULD** follow it unless there is good reason not to **STATED** what KCSIE says, without “must” or “should”

1 Is this a request for support?

- ☐ A child or their parent has asked the school to make changes, or put support in place, so the child can present as the opposite biological sex. This checklist is for that situation. **STATED** [260]
- ☐ If a child has only confided in a member of staff and asked for no change, this process does not apply: there is no reason to break any confidence unless there is a related safeguarding risk. **STATED** [271]
- ☐ The school should not initiate any action regarding social transition. **SHOULD** [255, 260]
- ☐ Requests about how a child takes part in PE where there are no safety concerns, and concerns about overnight sleeping arrangements that reflect a request for support, go through this same process. **SHOULD** [100, 203]
- ☐ Until the school has decided, and parents or carers have been involved as the guidance sets out, staff should not adopt any changes. **SHOULD** [260]

2 Before deciding

- ☐ Engage parents or carers as a matter of priority. Their views should carry great weight and be properly considered. **SHOULD** [268]
- ☐ Only if involving parents or carers would be a greater risk to the child than not involving them: the DSL determines what action is needed to safeguard the child, before parents are contacted or any decision is taken. **SHOULD** [268]
- ☐ Explore how best to support conversations with parents, including offering a staff member to be present or to speak to parents on the child’s behalf. **SHOULD** [270]
- ☐ Take time to understand the child’s thoughts and feelings, be appropriately professionally curious, and stay aware of possible vulnerabilities, including complex mental health and psychosocial needs and discriminatory bullying. **SHOULD** [257]
- ☐ Consider everything that could be affecting the child, including wider health issues or neurodiversity. **SHOULD** [266]
- ☐ Work with parents, consider any clinical evidence or advice, seek non-clinical professional advice where relevant (for example from the SENCO), and involve the DSL. **STATED** [266]
- ☐ Primary schools: be particularly conscious of safeguarding concerns relating to primary-aged children, and exercise particular caution. **SHOULD** [267, 273]
- ☐ Primary schools: support for full social transition is expected to be agreed very rarely. Advising on the risks and benefits of social transition is not a role for staff without appropriate clinical training. **STATED** [273]
- ☐ Following the Cass Review: older children will generally have greater agency to make their own decisions, and keeping options open and flexible helps avoid a child feeling under pressure to commit to a potentially irrevocable pathway when young. **STATED** [274]

3 Making the decision

- ☐ The first step is what is in the best interests of the child and of other children. The decision may not be the same as the child’s wishes. **STATED** [265]
- ☐ Consider how best to fulfil the duty to safeguard the child and their peers, so that any agreed course of action takes account of its impact on everyone affected. **SHOULD** [264]
- ☐ Take a very careful approach: social transition should be viewed as an active intervention. **SHOULD** [272]
- ☐ Comply with safeguarding legislation and with equality and human rights law, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. **MUST** [262, 275]
- ☐ Where a rule or policy puts gender-questioning children at a disadvantage, consider whether it has a legitimate aim and is a proportionate way of achieving it, including whether an exception could still achieve that aim. **SHOULD** [277]
- ☐ Explain the limits to the child sensitively: support will not include access to toilets, changing rooms or boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex, or to opposite-sex PE classes where single-sex PE is for safety. **SHOULD** [278]
- ☐ Make sure the child and family know the school will sanction bullying and harassment, and must also be conscious of pupils’ and staff’s rights relating to religion or belief. **SHOULD** [279]
- ☐ A school supporting social transition might discuss options with pupils and staff such as using names instead of pronouns. **STATED** [279]
- ☐ Document the decision-making process and keep records, including the reasons for decisions. **SHOULD** [261, 263, 74]
- ☐ Consider whether pupils would be best supported by a school policy explaining the steps the school takes when a child requests support. **SHOULD** [261]

4 Rules that apply whatever is decided

- ☐ Toilets: no child may use toilets designated for the opposite biological sex, including where the school is supporting any degree of social transition. Schools must provide separate toilets for boys and girls aged 8 and over. **MUST** [108, 109]
- ☐ Changing rooms and showers: no child aged 11 or older at the start of the school year may undress in front of a child of the opposite biological sex; when responding to a request, no child may have access to changing rooms designated for the opposite sex. **MUST** [115]
- ☐ Overnight: no child may share overnight accommodation with a child of the opposite biological sex, or have access to boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex. **MUST** [200]
- ☐ Sport: where single-sex sport is needed for safety, there are no exceptions. **MUST** [99, 276]
- ☐ Consider whether an alternative toilet, changing or washing facility, or a separate room, can be provided without compromising single-sex provision or anyone's safety, comfort, privacy or dignity. **SHOULD** [111, 117, 202]
- ☐ Keep a clear record of any such arrangements, make sure they are communicated appropriately, and review them regularly. **STATED** [112, 118]
- ☐ Make sure all relevant staff are aware of the child's biological sex. **SHOULD** [282]
- ☐ Record the child's biological sex accurately wherever it is recorded: this is a legal requirement. **MUST** [282]
- ☐ Take a strong, proactive stand against all forms of bullying. **MUST** [259]

5 Afterwards

- ☐ Circumstances and needs change: review decisions when they do, and involve the DSL immediately when deciding whether to review. **SHOULD** [280]
- ☐ Consider whether decisions taken before KCSIE 2026 came into force remain appropriate, taking into account the impact of any change on the child. **STATED** [281]
- ☐ Children who may be living in stealth: be particularly conscious of their vulnerabilities, and involve the DSL. **SHOULD** [267, 283]
- ☐ If a child wants to fully or partially reverse a request that was agreed, work closely with parents or carers and relevant experts so the child is supported. **SHOULD** [284]

The rules on toilets, changing rooms, overnight accommodation and sport apply to schools, colleges in the further education sector and 16–19 academies; other colleges should take independent legal advice [97, 114, 199]. Some colleges do not have a designated safeguarding lead. "Data protection laws" means the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK GDPR and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 [104]. This checklist summarises statutory guidance for England. It is not legal advice and does not replace KCSIE 2026 or the school's own policies.