

When your child's school talks to you about your child's gender: what the guidance says

For parents and carers in England, whatever your views. This explains what *Keeping children safe in education 2026* (KCSIE), the statutory guidance schools and colleges must have regard to, says a school will do. It does not take a view on what you or your child should do. Numbers in brackets are KCSIE paragraphs.

MUST the law requires it **SHOULD** schools should do this unless there is good reason not to **STATED** what the guidance says **DfE POLICY PAPER** from the Department for Education's policy paper, not KCSIE **GOOD PRACTICE** our suggestion, not from the guidance

Why the school is talking to you

- Where a child who is questioning their gender asks their school for support, the school should engage parents or carers as a matter of priority. **SHOULD** [268]
- A request can come from a child or from their parent or carer. It is not for schools to initiate any action in this area themselves. **STATED** [255, 260]
- If a child talks to a member of staff about how they feel but does not ask the school to change how they are treated, the guidance says there is no reason to break that confidence unless there is a related safeguarding risk. **STATED** [271]

What “social transition” means

- In the guidance, social transition means a school making changes, or putting support in place, to facilitate a child presenting as the opposite biological sex. **STATED** [260]
- A request might be, for example, about a change of name, pronouns or uniform. **DfE POLICY PAPER**
- The guidance says social transition should be viewed as an active intervention, and schools should take a very careful approach. **SHOULD** [272]

Your part in the decision

- Your views should carry great weight and be properly considered. **SHOULD** [268]
- The school should explore how best to support conversations between you and your child, including offering a member of staff to be present, or to speak to you on your child's behalf. **SHOULD** [270]
- In the vast majority of cases, the school is expected to work with parents or carers, consider any clinical evidence or advice, seek other professional advice where relevant (for example from the special educational needs coordinator), and involve its designated safeguarding lead (DSL). **STATED** [266]
- In rare circumstances, where involving parents or carers would be a greater risk to the child than not involving them, the DSL decides what is needed to keep the child safe before parents or carers are contacted or any decision is taken. **SHOULD** [268]

How the school decides

- The first step is what is in the best interests of your child and of other children. A decision may not be the same as your child's wishes. **STATED** [265]
- The school should consider everything that could be affecting your child, including any wider health issues or neurodiversity. **SHOULD** [266]
- For children of primary school age, schools should exercise particular caution, and support for full social transition is expected to be agreed very rarely. **SHOULD** [273]
- Older children will generally have greater agency to make their own decisions. **STATED** [274]
- The school should document how it reached its decision and keep records. **SHOULD** [261, 263]

What support cannot include, whatever is decided

- Pupils must not be allowed into toilets, changing rooms, or boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex. There are no exceptions. **MUST** [108, 115, 200, 276]
- Where a sport is played in single-sex groups for safety, there are no exceptions. **MUST** [99, 276]
- If a child does not want to use the facilities for their sex, the school should consider whether an alternative, such as a separate toilet or changing space, can be provided. **SHOULD** [111, 117, 202]

Afterwards

- Circumstances and needs can change. The school may review a decision, and a review includes involving parents or carers. **STATED** [280]
- If a child later wants to fully or partially reverse what was agreed, the school should work closely with parents or carers and relevant experts so the child is supported. **SHOULD** [284]
- Schools must take a strong, proactive stand against all forms of bullying. **MUST** [259]

Questions you might ask the school

? Does the school have a policy on this, and can I see it? **GOOD PRACTICE**

? Who will make the decision, and roughly when? **GOOD PRACTICE**

? How will my views, and my child's, be recorded? **GOOD PRACTICE**

? Who is my contact at the school, and what happens if I disagree with the decision? **GOOD PRACTICE**

This explainer describes what statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England says. It is not legal advice, and it does not replace KCSIE 2026 or your school's own policy and complaints procedure, which the school can give you. KCSIE 2026 is published on GOV.UK. The rules on facilities and sport apply to schools, colleges in the further education sector and 16–19 academies [107, 114, 199].