

Questioning your gender? What happens at school

This explains what the guidance for schools in England says will happen. It doesn't tell you what to do, what to say, or what to think. The guidance is called *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*.

If you talk to a member of staff about how you feel

It isn't for schools to start anything about this themselves. [255]

If you tell a member of staff how you feel, and you don't ask the school to change anything, the guidance says there is no reason for them to break your confidence. [271]

The exception is if they are worried about your safety or wellbeing. Then staff should act, and speak to the school's safeguarding lead. That can include involving your parents or carers. [58, 59, 271]

If you ask the school to change something

Asking the school to change something, for example your name, pronouns or uniform, is called a request. You can ask, or your parent or carer can. [260]

A request is decided by the school, not by one teacher. [260, 261]

Staff should not make changes, like using a different name, until the school has decided and your parents or carers have been involved. [260]

Your parents or carers

If there is a request, the school should involve your parents or carers as a priority, and their views should count for a lot. [268]

The school should think about how to help with those conversations. That can include a member of staff being there, or speaking to your parents or carers for you. [270]

In rare cases, if involving parents or carers would put a young person at greater risk, the school's safeguarding lead should first decide what is needed to keep them safe. [268]

How the school decides

The school starts from what is best for you and for other pupils. What you want matters, but the decision may not be what you asked for. [265]

The school should think about everything that could be affecting you, including any wider health issues or neurodiversity. [266]

Older pupils will generally have more say in decisions about themselves. [274]

Some things aren't possible, whatever is decided

Schools must not let pupils use toilets, changing rooms, or rooms for sleeping on trips or in boarding, that are meant for the opposite sex. There are no exceptions. [200, 276]

If you don't want to use the ones for your sex, the school should think about whether another option is possible, like a separate toilet. [111, 117]

Later on

Decisions can be looked at again if things change. [280]

If you want to change or undo something that was agreed, the school should work with your parents or carers, and others who can help, to support you. [284]

Bullying

Schools must take a strong stand against all kinds of bullying. [259]

If you are being bullied, you can tell a member of staff.

Talking to someone

If it feels safe, talking to a parent, carer or another trusted adult at home can help.

If you are ever worried about your safety, tell a member of staff you trust, or contact Childline on 0800 1111.

For adults checking this explainer. Numbers in brackets are paragraphs of KCSIE 2026. Every sentence that describes the guidance uses “must” only where KCSIE states a legal requirement and “should” only where KCSIE says “should”. The examples of name, pronouns or uniform come from the Department for Education’s policy paper, not KCSIE. The last three sentences (bullying, and talking to someone) are our suggestions, not the guidance. This explainer describes process only. It gives no advice on what a young person should say or keep private, and it is not a substitute for parents or carers. It is written for secondary-age pupils. It is not legal advice.