

Responding to a Request Relating to Gender Questioning and Social Transition

More Than Ed | Independent School

A safeguarding decision-making process — appendix to the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Status: Working draft — not yet in force

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Review / activation: On publication of final KCSIE 2026 (expected 1 September 2026), then annually

Responsible: Designated Safeguarding Lead (Heidi Lindle); Headteacher (Karen Holmes)

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1. Status of this appendix

Important	This appendix anticipates statutory guidance that is not yet in force. It must not be adopted or applied as current policy until the final guidance is published.
Basis	Draft KCSIE 2026, “Children who are questioning their gender” (paras 245–275), published for consultation on 12 February 2026. The consultation closed on 22 April 2026.
Until then	The school continues to follow KCSIE 2025. This appendix is held in draft so that the school can act quickly once the final guidance is confirmed.
On publication	The Designated Safeguarding Lead will review this appendix against the final wording, amend as needed, and bring it to the proprietor / governance for approval before it takes effect.

The final guidance may differ from the draft. In recent years the gap between draft and final KCSIE has been small, but the wording on this topic is contested and should be checked carefully on publication.

2. Purpose and scope

This appendix sets out how More Than Ed responds, sensitively and within its safeguarding duties, when a student is questioning their gender or when a student or their parents/carers ask the school to support an element of social transition. It is intended to give staff a clear, consistent and defensible process to follow.

It applies to all staff. It sits beneath, and is read alongside, the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Any concern arising under this appendix is a safeguarding matter and follows the school's normal safeguarding reporting routes to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Throughout, “students” is used in line with the school's house terminology.

3. Underpinning principles

- **Safeguarding first.** The wellbeing and safety of the child are at the centre of every decision. This is a safeguarding issue and is treated as one.
- **Best interests of the child — and of other children.** Any decision begins by asking what is in the best interests of the student concerned, while also having regard to the interests and safety of other students.
- **No one-size-fits-all.** Each situation is considered individually, on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the student's age, stage of development and particular needs.
- **A very careful, cautious approach.** Social transition is treated as a significant step that may affect a child's development and longer-term outcomes. Particular caution applies with younger students; such situations in the primary phase should be rare and approached with great care.

- **The school does not initiate.** It is not the school's role to initiate or encourage social transition. The process here applies only where a student or parent raises a request.
- **Parents and clinical input.** Parents/carers are normally involved, and any clinical advice the family has received is taken into account.
- **Legal duties.** Decisions are made with regard to the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, and are informed by the evidence and principles of the Cass Review (2024).
- **A defensible process.** The quality of the decision-making process matters as much as the outcome. Decisions are careful, balanced, proportionate and clearly recorded.

4. Key terms

Gender questioning: a student who is experiencing a sense of unease or uncertainty about their gender, or who expresses a wish to be understood as a gender different from their registered sex.

Social transition: changes a student may ask the school to support, such as a change of name, pronouns, uniform, or use of facilities. It does not involve any medical intervention, but is treated as an active step requiring careful consideration.

These descriptions will be aligned to the definitions in the final KCSIE 2026 wording once published.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 All staff

- Respond to any student with care, dignity and without judgement, and create a safe space for them to speak.
- Do not agree to, or put in place, any element of social transition, and do not make promises of confidentiality from parents. Pass the matter to the DSL promptly.
- Record what the student has said factually and report it through the usual safeguarding route.

5.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (Heidi Lindle)

- Leads the school's response to every request, oversees the best-interests consideration, and is the decision-maker on whether and how parents are involved.
- Ensures decisions, and the reasons for them, are recorded; involves the Headteacher and, where appropriate, external agencies and the SENCO.

5.3 Headteacher (Karen Holmes) and proprietor

- Provides oversight, supports the DSL in finely balanced decisions, and ensures the school can evidence careful and lawful decision-making to inspectors.

5.4 SENCO / therapeutic team

- Advises where a student has co-occurring needs (for example autism, ADHD, attachment or mental-health needs), which is particularly relevant in a specialist SEMH setting.

6. The process when a request is received

6.1 Receive and record

Any member of staff who receives a request, or who becomes aware that a student is questioning their gender, records it factually on CPOMS and notifies the DSL the same day. No element of social transition is actioned at this stage.

6.2 DSL consideration

The DSL reviews the information, decides who needs to be involved, and treats the matter as a safeguarding case with a clear escalation pathway. The DSL considers whether any immediate welfare or risk concerns exist (including bullying, distress or mental-health risk) and acts on them.

6.3 Best-interests assessment

The DSL leads a considered assessment of what is in the best interests of the student, alongside the interests and safety of other students. There is no automatic or default response: any request — to a change of name, pronouns, uniform or facilities — is weighed individually.

6.4 Involving parents and carers

Parents/carers are normally involved in discussions where a student is questioning their gender. The school would only consider not informing parents where doing so would place the student at risk of significant harm. The threshold for excluding parents is high; any such decision is made by the DSL, is based on specific identified safeguarding concerns, and is recorded with clear reasons.

6.5 Clinical advice

Where the family has received clinical advice relevant to the student, the school takes it into account. The school does not provide clinical advice itself.

6.6 Associated vulnerabilities

The DSL and SENCO consider any associated vulnerabilities — for example bullying, anxiety, low mood, self-harm risk, or co-occurring autism or ADHD. The Cass Review highlighted the importance of not assuming a single explanation for a young person's distress; in our cohort these overlaps are common and are assessed with care.

6.7 Age and stage

Decisions take careful account of the student's age and developmental stage. Greater caution applies with younger students, and requests involving primary-aged students should be rare and handled with particular care.

6.8 Decision and rationale

The DSL reaches a decision, records it together with the reasons and the factors weighed, and communicates it clearly to those who need to know. The decision-record template at the end of this appendix is completed and stored on CPOMS.

6.9 Review

Arrangements are kept under review and revisited if circumstances change. Any change is recorded in the same way.

7. Single-sex provision and records

The draft guidance is clear that single-sex spaces are protected. Pending confirmation in the final wording, the school's position is:

- **Toilets and changing rooms:** separate facilities for boys and girls are provided for students aged eight and over, on the basis of biological sex, with no exceptions. Where a student needs an alternative, a suitable separate (for example individual, lockable) facility is offered.
- **Residential and overnight arrangements:** sleeping and washing arrangements on trips and residentials are organised on the basis of biological sex.
- **Sport and PE:** where physical differences mean mixed-sex provision would put a student's safety at risk, activities are provided in single-sex groups; the priority is that all students can take part safely.
- **Records:** the school records each student's sex accurately in its records, so that staff can make appropriate decisions and keep students safe.

8. Recording and information sharing

All discussions, decisions and the reasons for them are recorded on CPOMS. Records are factual, proportionate and stored securely. Information is shared on a need-to-know basis, in line with the school's data-protection arrangements (UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018) and overseen by the Data Protection Lead (Jonathan Munding). Careful recording is what allows the school to demonstrate that each decision was considered, balanced and lawful.

9. Related policies, legislation and guidance

Related policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) and PSHE Policy
- Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Legislation and guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (current) — and draft KCSIE 2026 (paras 245–275), pending
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Cass Review: Independent Review of Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People (2024)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

Decision-record template

Complete and store on CPOMS. Use factual, dated entries.

Student / reference	<i>Initials or CPOMS reference — avoid unnecessary identifying detail.</i>
Date of request	<i>When the request was made / concern first raised.</i>
What is being requested	<i>The specific element(s) of social transition, in the student's words where possible.</i>
Who is involved	<i>DSL, Headteacher, SENCO, parents/carers, external agencies.</i>
Parental involvement	<i>Confirmed; or, if parents not informed, the specific safeguarding reason and who decided.</i>
Best-interests considerations	<i>Factors weighed for the student and for other students; any associated vulnerabilities.</i>
Clinical advice considered	<i>Any clinical input the family has shared.</i>
Decision and rationale	<i>What was decided and why; what was not agreed and why.</i>
Review date	<i>When the arrangement will be revisited.</i>
Recorded by / date	<i>Name, role, date.</i>

End of appendix.