BENSHAM MANOR School

Supporting Transgender and Gender-Questioning Students Policy

Last reviewed: September 2026

Bensham Manor School is committed to a safe, supportive and inclusive environment where every student is treated with dignity, kindness and respect and has a sense of belonging. Our approach is underpinned by our values of Safe, Ready and Kind and our responsibility to safeguard every student.

As a secondary special school, we recognise the wide range of SEND, communication needs and levels of emotional and developmental understanding. Support will be individualised, accessible and appropriate to each student.

This policy reflects Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998 and current Department for Education guidance.

1. When a Student Questions Their Gender

Staff should listen calmly and without judgement, reassure the student that they will be treated with kindness and respect, and avoid making assumptions about what their feelings mean. Staff should not encourage a student towards or away from a particular identity or provide medical or clinical advice.

Questioning gender does not in itself constitute a safeguarding concern. Staff should consider any wider concerns relating to wellbeing, family circumstances, friendships, bullying or safety and seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where appropriate.

2. SEND and Communication

The individual student's needs must be central to the school's response. Staff should consider developmental understanding, SEND and neurodiversity, communication and language needs, emotional wellbeing, family and social circumstances, bullying and the student's ability to understand choices and consequences.

Discussions should be accessible and may use simplified language, symbols, visuals or the student's usual communication approaches. The DSL, SENCO and other appropriate professionals may contribute where necessary.

3. Parents and Carers

Where a student requests support with social transition, parents or carers should normally be involved as a matter of priority and their views given significant weight.

If informing parents or carers could place the student at increased risk of harm, the matter must first be discussed with the DSL and managed through safeguarding procedures. A student simply discussing gender questioning with a trusted adult does not automatically require parents to be informed unless there is a safeguarding concern or a request requiring school action.

4. Requests for Social Transition

The school will not initiate or encourage social transition. Requests relating to names, pronouns, clothing, activities or other aspects of school life will be considered carefully and individually.

The student's views will be listened to but will not automatically determine the decision. The school will consider safeguarding and best interests, age and developmental understanding, SEND and communication needs, parents' or carers' views, relevant professional advice, safety, privacy and dignity, the rights of others and the school's legal responsibilities.

Staff should not independently make significant changes to arrangements without following the school's agreed process. Where difficulties arise concerning pronouns, using the student's name may provide a respectful and practical alternative.

5. Toilets, Changing, Sport and Residential Visits

The school will maintain appropriate single-sex toilets and changing provision based on biological sex. Students will not use facilities designated for the opposite biological sex. Where a student is uncomfortable, an appropriate private or self-contained alternative will be considered where available.

Where PE or sport is separated by sex for safety, participation will be organised according to biological sex. Other activities will consider safety, fairness, inclusion and individual circumstances.

On residential visits, students will not share sleeping accommodation with students of the opposite biological sex. Appropriate alternative arrangements will be considered where possible.

6. Records and Confidentiality

Where the school is required to record a student's sex, biological sex will be recorded accurately. A preferred or chosen name may be recorded separately and used in agreed circumstances where appropriate.

Information will be handled sensitively and shared only where needed to support the student, fulfil safeguarding responsibilities or meet legal duties. Staff must not promise absolute confidentiality.

7. Bullying, Discrimination and Belonging

Every student has the right to feel safe, respected and that they belong at Bensham Manor School. Bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation relating to gender, gender reassignment or any other protected characteristic will not be tolerated.

Staff will challenge discriminatory language, name-calling, humiliation, harassment, intimidation and online bullying in line with school policies. Our Safe, Ready and Kind expectations apply to everyone; differences in views or beliefs do not justify unkind or disrespectful behaviour.

8. Teaching and the Curriculum

Teaching will follow current statutory RSHE guidance and will be factual, accurate, impartial, sensitive, accessible to students with SEND and appropriate to chronological age and developmental understanding.

Staff should distinguish established facts from areas where different views exist and should not present contested views as established fact. Teaching should promote dignity, respect and belonging while avoiding restrictive gender stereotypes.

9. Staff Responsibilities and Decision-Making

Staff are not expected to make complex decisions about social transition independently. Significant requests should be referred to an appropriate senior leader and, where relevant, the DSL and SENCO.

Staff should listen respectfully, follow safeguarding procedures, record significant concerns, challenge bullying and discrimination, maintain appropriate confidentiality and avoid medical or clinical advice.

Significant decisions should be recorded, including the student's views, parents' or carers' views where appropriate, SEND and communication needs, safeguarding considerations, the decision and reasons. Arrangements should be reviewed when circumstances or needs change.

10. Related Policies and Review

This policy should be read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, Behaviour and Anti-Bullying, RSHE, SEND and Educational Visits policies.

The Headteacher, DSL and governing body will keep this policy under review following significant changes to guidance or legislation and in accordance with the school's normal review cycle.