

## Gender Identity Policy

### Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish the framework governing the School's response when a pupil or parent or carer raises questions about gender or requests support connected with social transition. This policy is in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which includes gender reassignment as one of the nine 'protected characteristics' where people are protected against unlawful discrimination, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Mount School York aims to give support and understanding to anyone who wishes to take, or has taken steps, to begin transitioning to a different gender from that assigned at birth. The challenges need to be addressed with sensitivity especially as a transgender pupil will be more identifiable in a single sex senior school.

### Transgender Definitions

In this policy 'transgender' is used to refer to the following groups:

- People who have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment under section 7 of the Equality Act 2010, which says: "A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex."
- Some pupils may describe themselves as transgender, non-binary or gender-fluid without necessarily having the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. Where it is unclear whether a gender questioning pupil has that protected characteristic, the school will follow KCSIE 2026 and conduct its Equality Act assessment on the basis that the pupil may have it.

### Further Definitions:

**Biological sex:** A pupil's sex, male or female. Biological sex will be recorded accurately wherever the school records sex.

**Gender questioning pupil:** A pupil who is questioning how they feel about being a boy or a girl, including the physical attributes of their sex or associated social expectations.

**Social transition:** A request that the school change how it treats a pupil so that the pupil presents as the opposite biological sex. This may include requests concerning names, pronouns, uniform or participation in school activities. It cannot include access to opposite-sex toilets, changing rooms, showers or residential accommodation.

### Meeting the Needs of Transgender Pupils

It is important to recognise that the relationship between biological sex, gender identity and what this means for access to provision and recognition, is a highly charged and sensitive subject. The school does not form a view on this debate but focuses on providing a respectful, kind, safe and non-judgemental environment in which our pupils are able to explore their own identity in a way and timescale that is right for them, knowing that they will receive acceptance and support whatever conclusions they reach

The underpinning ethos of this policy is that matters related to gender identities are acknowledged and handled in a respectful way, with the child's individual needs and circumstances at the centre of

our thinking. Our fundamental duty is to look after each pupil's well-being: our pupils come first, and this will always guide our response.

The school and its staff will not initiate social transition. No member of staff may independently implement a change of name, pronouns, uniform, facilities or other treatment connected with social transition. Requests must be referred to the Head and DSL and considered under this policy.

KCSIE 2026 describes accommodating social transition as an active intervention. The school will therefore take a very careful approach, recognising the limited evidence about its long-term effects. A pupil's wishes will be listened to carefully but will not automatically determine the outcome. Primary-age requests will receive particular caution, and support for full social transition at primary age will be agreed only very rarely.

In cases where a child confides in a member of staff about their feelings but does not ask the school to make changes to how they are treated, there is no reason to break any confidence unless there is a related safeguarding risk, following KCSIE 2026 recommendations. Staff must not promise absolute confidentiality. If a conversation raises concerns about the pupil's safety or welfare, normal safeguarding procedures will be followed. Where a pupil requests changes amounting to support for social transition, the matter must be referred to the DSL and Head, and parents will ordinarily be involved in accordance with this policy.

## **Parents and carers**

Where a pupil requests support with social transition, the school will engage the pupil's parents or carers as a matter of priority. Their views will carry great weight and will be properly considered.

In the rare circumstances where involving parents or carers may create a greater safeguarding risk for the pupil, the DSL will assess and record that risk before parents are contacted or any decision is made. A pupil's request that their parents should not be informed will not, by itself, be sufficient; the school must identify and assess the particular safeguarding risk.

Clinical or other professional evidence may inform the school's assessment but does not replace parental involvement or transfer the decision to a medical professional.

Should a pupil disclose that they are having gender identity thoughts, that they are identifying as trans, gender fluid, gender non-conforming, non- binary or gender questioning, the school's overall approach is not an affirming and encouraging one, it is a supportive and inclusive one. A supportive and inclusive approach is:

- To listen to the pupil and not judge
- To acknowledge the pupil's personal and individual experience
- To make clear to the pupil that the school is acting in the pupil's best interests and is accepting of their exploration of identity
- To work collaboratively, as needed, with the pupil, parents/carers, and any external professionals to look after the needs of the pupil.
- The DSL will work in consultation with the Head teacher to ensure that the correct support, risk assessments and decisions are recorded are made in line with the recommendations in KSCIE 2026. Records will be made alongside our safeguarding policy on Wellbeing manager.
- There would be scheduled review points to work with pupils and parents and review arrangements in place. If safeguarding circumstances change a review would be completed at this point.

Support may include but is not limited to:

- Providing sensitive pastoral support without initiating or implementing social-transition changes while the pupil's circumstances and any request are carefully considered.
  - Referring to the school counsellor
- Supporting the pupil and their parents or carers to obtain appropriate advice from their GP or other suitably qualified professional where appropriate.
  - Facilitating a social transition in school if this is agreed in tandem with parents/carers to be in the best interests of the pupil.

In our Senior School we remain a girl's school. However, during the process towards an affirmed binary male identity request will be considered individually by the Head, with advice from the DSL. No outcome will be automatic. The assessment will consider:

- The pupil's wishes, age, maturity and understanding.
- The pupil's welfare and best interests.
- The welfare and best interests of other pupils.
- The nature, extent and duration of the requested changes.
- Relevant mental-health, neurodevelopmental, SEND, family, peer and safeguarding circumstances.
- Any relevant clinical evidence or other professional advice.
- The possibility of bullying or social pressure.
- The effects of granting or refusing the request.
- The school's safeguarding, equality and human-rights obligations.
- The safety, privacy, dignity and comfort of everyone affected.
- Whether the request is practicable and sustainable.

The decision, reasons, evidence considered, persons consulted and arrangements for review will be recorded securely on Wellbeing manager.

A girls' school which permits a pupil who is undergoing gender reassignment to remain after they adopt a male gender role would not lose its single-sex status.

The details of what adjustments would need to be made would be specific to the needs and experience of each individual pupil and a support plan would be drawn up with the DSL and school nurse. These will be discussed openly and comprehensively, as appropriate with the pupils, their parents/carers, appropriate external professionals and the essential school key personnel in order to understand an ideal picture and then determine what is feasible.

The underpinning ethos of this discussion is that adjustments will be possible if they are in the best interest of the pupil and without significant impact on the learning of other pupils.

### **Protection Against Harassment and Bullying**

The Mount School York aims to create an safe, respectful environment for everyone culture in its school, free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Bullying, harassment or victimisation relating to sex, gender reassignment, gender questioning, perceived gender identity or protected religion or belief will not be tolerated. Reports will be handled under the School's Anti-Bullying, Behaviour and Safeguarding policies. Respectful disagreement or an accidental use of language will not automatically constitute bullying, but persistent or deliberately targeted conduct may do so.

## **Facilities**

The school will provide and operate facilities in accordance with KCSIE 2026 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Pupils will not be permitted to use toilets designated for the opposite biological sex. Separate toilets will be maintained for girls and boys aged eight and over, except for facilities contained in individual rooms which can be secured from the inside and are intended for use by one pupil at a time.

A pupil aged 11 or over will not be required or permitted to undress in the presence of a pupil of the opposite biological sex. Pupils will not be permitted to use changing rooms or showers designated for the opposite biological sex.

Pupils will not use boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite biological sex.

Where a gender-questioning pupil does not wish to use facilities designated for their biological sex, the school will consider whether a suitable private, self-contained alternative or access at a different time can be offered. Any alternative must protect the safety, comfort, dignity and privacy of that pupil and all other pupils.

Individual arrangements will be recorded, communicated only to those who need to know, and reviewed regularly.

## **Names and pronouns**

Requests concerning names, pronouns will be referred to the Head and DSL and considered through the documented decision-making process. Staff must not implement such changes independently.

There is no automatic entitlement to any change. Where a change is agreed, the support plan will identify where and by whom it will be used, how parents will be involved, how records will be maintained and when the arrangement will be reviewed.

The school will not tolerate bullying or deliberately targeted harassment. It will also respect the Equality Act and Human Rights Act rights of pupils and staff, including protected religious or philosophical beliefs. Where appropriate, using the pupil's name instead of pronouns may provide a practical and respectful approach.

## **Records and information sharing**

The school will record a pupil's biological sex accurately wherever sex is recorded. An agreed informal name will not replace the pupil's biological sex or legal name in official safeguarding and administrative records.

Relevant staff must have access to accurate sex information where necessary to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities. Information will otherwise be shared only with people who need it for safeguarding, decision-making or implementation of an agreed support plan, in accordance with data-protection law and the school's privacy notices.