



RMS FOR GIRLS

GENDER QUESTIONING (PUPILS) POLICY

School update	
Responsible for review of policy	Deputy Head Pastoral
Last School update	February 2026
Governor Sub-Committee approval	
Sub Committee to review and approve	Pastoral
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1. Introduction

Our School is an inclusive and respectful community. Our focus is on helping all pupils thrive, develop their authentic selves and be ready for the adult world. Changes in society and culture do and should impact upon how we live and work together as a School.

Gender identity is now a subject of much discussion and interest and in some cases, has polarised opinion. People are now able to articulate that the gender they are assigned at birth (by some people called 'biological sex') does not match their internal sense of gender or that their internal sense of self does not fit within a traditional binary sense of gender at all ('non-binary'). Whilst this is not new at all, and there have been transgender people and gender non-conforming people in society throughout time, the digital age has increased awareness, access to information and, arguably created a societal environment in which these conversations can now more easily take place.

In the context of single-sex education such as ours, issues can be intensified particularly when a student's very place in the School might be called into question because of gender identity. This is particularly true because of the way that society has traditionally interchanged the use of the terms Sex and Gender. It is important therefore, that we have in place a process to manage situations positively and effectively when a pupil is questioning their gender. It is therefore also important that we seek to create a culture and practice in our School where both of these characteristics are respected equally and where every pupil feels valued, visible, respected and can therefore thrive and achieve their best in School and beyond.

We expect everyone in the RMS community to be treated and to treat others with respect. Our aim is to provide an environment free from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in any form that may affect the dignity of the individual. Any behaviour, comments or attitudes that undermine or threaten an individual's self-esteem on these grounds will not be tolerated.

1.1 This Policy has been prepared with reference to relevant:

1.1.1 legislation (in particular the Equality Act 2010)

1.1.2 statutory guidance, in particular the following guidance documents from the Department for Education:

(a) *The Equality Act 2010 and Schools (May 2014)*

(b) *Keeping Children Safe in Education*

(c) *Relationships, Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education*



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(d) *Political impartiality in Schools (February 2022)*

- 1.1.3 non-statutory guidance, including the Draft Gender Questioning Children non-statutory guidance for Schools and colleges in England (December 2023)
- 1.1.4 the 'interim update on the practical implications of the UK Supreme Court judgment' (April 2025) from the Equality and Human Rights Commission ("EHRC").

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance to the School's pupils, parents, and staff on the School's approach to gender-questioning and gender neutral matters.

This policy also supports members of the School community in meeting the requirements of relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010, which lists gender reassignment as one of the nine protected characteristics on the grounds of which people are protected against unlawful discrimination, and the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

There are a range of terms that are used to describe different gender identities. The Equality Act 2010 includes a definition of the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, which is detailed at paragraph 6.3 below. For simplicity, we will use the term 'gender questioning' pupil to refer to pupils who have expressed an intention to identify with a gender that differs from their biological sex.

3. Scope

This policy applies to current pupils of the School.

4. Objectives

- 4.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure
 - effective arrangements exist for support pupils who are questioning their gender
 - all pupils are treated in a fair and consistent manner.

5. The law

- 5.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Schools must not unlawfully discriminate (either directly or indirectly via policies, applied criteria or practices), harass or or victimise pupils, in terms of admission to the School or in the provision of education, benefits, facilities and services on the grounds of any protected characteristic. These protected characteristics include sex and gender reassignment.



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- 5.2 The Equality Act defines sex as biological sex. A pupil's legal sex will therefore be their biological sex (i.e. that which they were assigned at birth, as generally determined by observations at birth).
- 5.3 A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if that 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". (Equality Act 2010)
- 5.4 This means that any pupil who is legally one sex but makes clear an intention to identify as another sex and an intention to undergo a process or has undergone a process (or part of it) to reassign their sex is likely to have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.
- 5.5 The safest view at present is that pupils who express a non-binary, gender questioning or gender non-conforming or gender fluid identity are also likely to be protected under the Equality Act 2010, but this has not been tested fully by the UK courts.

6. Our approach

- 6.1 In such a complex and personal journey, there is not a policy or process that will fit all pupils. Therefore, this policy aims to give everyone involved in the School some guidance as to how the School might consider responding to situations as a starting point for an individualised discussion and solution, understanding that all decisions are not finite.
- 6.2 The School takes a neutral stance to gender-questioning issues and focuses on providing a respectful, kind, safe and non-judgemental environment. We will avoid placing any pressure on the pupil to live or behave in accordance with their biological sex, or equally to live or behave as another gender. Any pupil that wishes to explore their gender identity will be permitted to do so in their own way, and at their own pace, under the guidelines set out in this Policy.
- 6.3 The underpinning ethos of this policy is that matters related to gender-questioning issues 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.
- 6.4 The School will endeavour to work in close partnership with parents and carers of gender-questioning pupils. The School favours an open dialogue between the School, pupils and parents / carers, especially in cases where the pupil is under the age of 16 (in which case the School will involve the parents of the gender-questioning pupil unless there are safeguarding reasons not to). In all cases the School will seek the wishes of the pupil and take them into account.



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6.5 Support for gender-questioning pupils will be available via the pastoral team (Form Tutor, Head of Year, Deputy Head Pastoral, Boarding and counselling team). Our aim is to make sure the pupil has a safe space to feel heard and to help them take as much time as they need to consider and reflect before any steps are taken to implement any decisions.

6.6 Should a pupil disclose that they are gender questioning, the School's overall approach is a supportive and inclusive one. The School will:

- listen to the pupil and not judge
- acknowledge the pupil's personal and individual experience
- make clear to the pupil that the School is acting in the pupil's best interests and is accepting of their exploration of identity
- work collaboratively, as needed, with the pupil, parents/carers, and any external professionals to look after the needs of the pupil.

Support may include but is not limited to:

- Referring to School counselling
- Referring to a GP or CAMHS
- Facilitating a social transition in School if this is agreed in tandem with parents/carers and/or medical professional to be in the best interests of the pupil.

7. Admissions

7.1 The School is a single sex School and the Equality Act 2010 envisages that single sex Schools may refuse admission to pupils of the opposite sex. However, the Equality Act 2010 does permit the admission of pupils of the opposite sex, where such admission is exceptional or their numbers are comparatively small and their admission is confined to particular courses or classes. As the School operates as a girls' School, it will generally only consider those who are legally defined as female at admission stage (i.e. if their biological sex is female).

7.2 Whilst we remain a girl's School a gender questioning pupil who wishes to socially transition will be accommodated providing:

- This is their wish, and
- A thorough process of discussion and assessment has taken place, including with parents/carers, School counsellors, GP, CAMHS or such other third-party medical professional as appropriate, and



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- It is believed to be in the best interests of the pupil and their well-being, and
- Adjustments and processes can be put in place to ensure that both the pupil concerned, and other pupils can thrive and have their needs met.

7.3 The details of what adjustments would need to be made would be specific to the needs and experience of each individual pupil. 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.

7.4 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.

8. Confidentiality and communication with parents/carers

8.1 What information is given to who, and when is a sensitive and important consideration. The School will take into consideration the balance of safeguarding, confidentiality, and support.

8.2 As stated at 6.4, the School would wish to work in close partnership with parents and carers of gender-questioning pupils. However, there may be circumstances in which the gender-questioning pupil may have different views as to who they discuss their gender identity with, what information is shared by the School, when and with whom (and related concerns). In these situations, the School will have regard to the maturity and capacity of the gender-questioning pupil and whether there are any safeguarding reasons that justify a modified approach.

8.3 There may be situations where information will need to be shared with parents / carers or others (for example, the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead). Staff should therefore avoid making any promises of absolute confidentiality to pupils. The School will liaise with external agencies as appropriate, such as social care and CAMHS, so that they can provide the best support they can for both the pupil and the family.

8.4 Confidential information about gender-questioning pupils in most circumstances should not be shared with other parents and any queries or questions from other parents should be referred to the Head.

9. Names and Pronouns

9.1 The School recognises that gender-questioning pupils sometimes prefer to change the name they are known by and the pronouns used to describe them. Where a pupil makes a request of this nature, the School will:



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- seek to accommodate it where reasonably possible;
- discuss with the pupil the appropriate terms to use and how best to communicate this change to staff and other pupils (and the parents of the gender-questioning pupil where appropriate); and
- discuss any restrictions in relation to the name under which a pupil can be entered into external exams, and explore the options with the pupil, their parents and the relevant exam board as appropriate (more on this below).

9.2 For many gender questioning pupils, the opportunity to be known by their preferred name and pronouns is a pivotal and affirming process, even as they move through their own exploration. Whilst the School acknowledges the importance of this, they must record a pupil's legal name in the admissions register.

9.3 The information to be contained in a school admissions register is statutory and is set out in section 434 of the Education Act 1996 and subsequent regulations. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 set out that the School is required to register each pupil's sex along with their legal name.

9.4 Having the correct information about a child is also important in the context of the School fulfilling its safeguarding duties, as such all relevant staff should be aware of a child's biological sex. The School is legally required to record a child's biological sex accurately wherever it is recorded. If a gender questioning pupil take steps to have their legal name changed the School will require evidence of the change (i.e a copy of the deed poll or a form of identification in the new name).

9.5 In relation to official examinations and exam certificates, pupils must use their legal name rather than their preferred name i.e. the name referred to on a pupil's birth certificate or passport. It may, however, be possible to arrange for exam certificates and papers to be issued in a pupil's preferred name, if this is the child's preference. Guidance will be sought from individual exam boards where appropriate. It may not always be possible to change details on exam certificates.

9.6 If a gender questioning pupil approaches staff with a request to adopt a preferred name or pronouns, the above obligations will be explained to them to ensure that they understand the distinction and that no upset is caused to them by any communications in which they are identified by their legal name or by use of incorrect pronouns. The School understands that intentionally using the incorrect name or pronoun of a pupil can constitute discrimination and / or bullying and the School will address it appropriately in line with school policies.

10. Uniform



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- 10.1 The School will ensure that there are a range of uniform choices so that some items will always be suitable for pupils who are gender questioning (as well as meeting other needs such as religion, body image and disability). Clothing will be appropriate and comfortable. We believe such uniform options will benefit all pupils.
- 10.2 If any gender-questioning pupil has any particular difficulty complying with the School's uniform policy, they should raise this with a member of staff, and the School will consider these concerns on a case by case basis.
- 11. Toilets and changing facilities**
- 11.1 RMS has individual student cubicle toilets, and all pupils have access to cubicles within the changing facilities. In addition, RMS has identified and signposted gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities in School and will continue to review this provision over time.
- 12. Trips**
- 12.1 The School will consider any additional needs of gender-questioning pupils in advance of planned School trips, and whether the School should put any specific arrangements in place to support a gender-questioning pupil (such as checking ahead to understand the nature of the facilities available). In some circumstances, the School may provide additional facilities to protect the privacy of a gender-questioning pupil.
- 12.2 If participating in a School trip involving an overnight stay, an individual risk assessment will be undertaken, and decisions made accordingly based on individual and trip circumstances. The safety and wellbeing of all pupils, including the non-binary/gender fluid/transgender/gender non-conforming pupil, is the primary consideration.
- 13. Boarding**
- 13.1 School staff should work together with gender questioning pupils and their families to find an approach that is practical and enables the pupil to fully participate.
- 13.2 For some pupils it may be possible to allocate a single room. The School will give consideration to the implications of being in a particularly gendered environment. The same considerations around toilets, bathrooms and changing facilities as suggested for elsewhere in the School will be followed.
- 13.3 The School will take a case by case approach, weighing up the relevant factors in each individual case, which are likely to include: the legal requirements the School must meet, the wishes, welfare, age, development, and privacy needs of the gender-questioning pupil and any other pupils who may be impacted by the proposed arrangements, the particular circumstances of the facilities available
- 14. Gender questioning in the curriculum**



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- 14.1 The School's Relationship and Sex Education and health education will ensure the needs of all pupils are appropriately met and that all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect. For older pupils in secondary Schools, this will include the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (with particular reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, including sex and gender reassignment).
- 14.2 The School will ensure that the approach and content of teaching is sensitive and age appropriate. The School will fully integrate any teaching on LGBTQ+ and gender-questioning issues into programmes of study and deliver it at a timely point as part of the pupils' curriculum.
- 14.3 The School will have regard to the statutory guidance 'Political impartiality in Schools' (February 2022) as appropriate, when devising and delivering the curriculum as it relates to political issues connected with gender-questioning and gender identity.
- 15. Bullying**
15. The School does not tolerate bullying of any form and deals with any bullying under its Anti-Bullying Policy. This includes bullying for reasons related to a pupil's sex or gender identity.



Appendix A: glossary

Acquired gender: Used in the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to describe a person's gender after transitioning. As this is a legal term, many people now prefer to use the term "affirmed" gender.

Assigned gender: The gender assigned to someone at birth, based on their physical characteristics.

Cisgender: Refers to someone who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Crossdresser: Someone who chooses to wear clothes not conventionally associated with their assigned gender. "Crossdresser" is now used in preference to the term "transvestite", which is considered to be outdated and can cause offence. Cross dressers are generally comfortable with their assigned gender and do not intend to transition.

Gender dysphoria: A recognised medical condition where the individual experiences severe discomfort and anxiety because their gender identity does not align with their biological sex.

Gender expression: How someone manifests their gender identity in society, for example through their appearance and behaviour.

Gender fluid: Refers to someone whose gender identity changes over time from one end of the spectrum to the other.

Gender identity: A person's internal perception of their gender, their sense of self. For transgender people, their gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

Genderqueer: Refers to someone whose gender identity falls on the spectrum between male and female.

Gender reassignment (or transitioning): The process where an individual changes their expressed gender to live fully in the gender with which they identify. For example, a person who was born female decides to take steps to live the rest of their life as a man. Gender reassignment does not require medical treatment and is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

Intersex: An intersex person is born with ambiguous genitalia and/or sex chromosomal variations, making it difficult to classify their biological sex. There are many different intersex conditions. An intersex person may self-identify as a man or a woman or neither.

Non-binary: An inclusive term to describe people whose gender identity is fluid and not exclusively male or female. A non-binary person may identify as neither male nor female or may feel that they embody elements of both genders, or that they are something different. The terms intersex and non-binary are not interchangeable.



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Transgender (or trans): An umbrella term describing the diverse range of people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the gender they were assigned at birth. The term can encompass individuals who are transsexual, cross dressers or non-binary.

Transsexual: A transsexual person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment and is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as someone who is "proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment". Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Act. It is not necessary for a transsexual person to have to be under medical supervision to be protected in law from discrimination.

Transphobia: A fear of or a dislike of transgender people. It is based on prejudice and misunderstanding and can involve verbal abuse, physical violence and other forms of harassment.