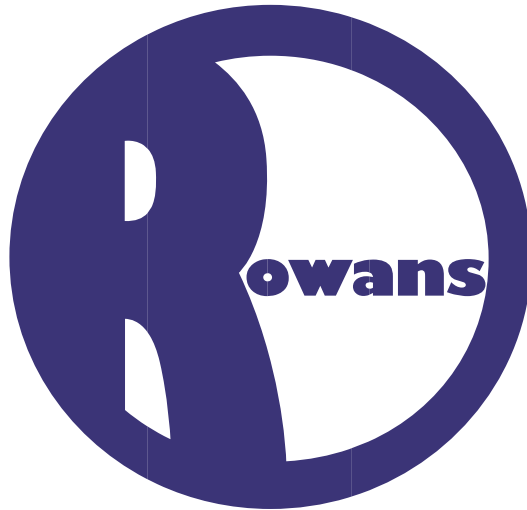




Gender Questioning Policy

Policy Written/Reviewed by	Lacey King
Date of Review	September 2026
Date of Next Review	September 2027

Policy Statement:

The Rowans AP Academy is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which the welfare and best interests of every child are paramount.

We recognise that some children and young people may question their gender or experience uncertainty or distress relating to their biological sex, gender, appearance or how they are perceived by others.

Any pupil who raises questions about their gender will be treated with dignity, compassion and respect. Staff will all listen carefully to the pupil and ensure that appropriate support both pastoral and safeguarding are available.

In accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE), the school will approach gender questioning topics and conversation with care, taking a child-centred approach, whereby each child is taken into account on an individualised basis.

Decisions will be made based on the individual circumstances of the pupil and will consider the following;

- The pupil's welfare and best interests
- The pupil's age and developmental stage
- Safeguarding considerations
- The pupil's wishes and feelings
- The views of parents or carers
- Any relevant medical evidence or advice
- SEND
- The impact on other pupils
- The school's legal obligations under safeguarding, education and equality legislation

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for responding when a pupil or their parent/carers raises the topic of gender questioning or requests that the school supports aspects of social transition.

The policy aims to ensure that;

- Safeguarding remains central to all decision making
- Pupils are listened to and treated with respect
- Parents and carers are appropriately involved
- Staff understand their responsibilities and professional boundaries
- Decisions are made on an individual basis rather than automatically
- Decisions and their rationale are appropriately recorded
- Bullying, harassment and discrimination are challenged
- The safety, privacy, dignity and welfare of all pupils are considered
- The school complies with KCSIE 2026 and relevant legislation

When a Pupil Questions Their Gender:

When a pupil discloses to a member of staff about gender questioning, the member of staff should:

1. Listen calmly and respectfully
2. Thank the pupil for speaking to them
3. Avoid making assumptions or reaching conclusions
4. Allow the pupil to explain their thoughts and feelings in their own words
5. Establish whether the pupil is simply sharing their feelings or requesting changes within the school
6. Consider whether there are any immediate safeguarding or wellbeing concerns
7. Follow normal safeguarding procedures where concerns arise
8. Seek advice from the DSL where appropriate

Requests for Social Transition:

KCSIE 2026 describes social transition as circumstances where changes are requested to facilitate a child presenting as the opposite biological sex.

The school will not initiate social transition.

Where a pupil or parent/carers makes a request relating to social transition, this will be referred to an appropriate member of senior leadership and, where relevant, the DSL.

Individual members of staff must not independently agree changes relating to social transition before the school's agreed decision-making process has taken place.

The school will take a very careful approach, recognising that social transition is considered an active intervention and that evidence about its long-term effects on children and young people remains limited.

Names and Pronouns:

Requests for a different name or pronouns will form part of the school's individual consideration of a request for social transition.

Staff should not independently implement changes before the school's agreed process has been followed.

Where a request has been agreed, the school will determine how this will operate consistently and sensitively.

Bullying, deliberate humiliation, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated. Where difficulties arise concerning pronouns, the school may consider practical alternatives, including using the pupils agreed name rather than pronouns.

School Records and Biological Sex:

Accurate information is essential to effective safeguarding.

The school will ensure that a pupil's biological sex is accurately recorded wherever sex is recorded and that relevant staff are aware of the pupil's biological sex where required for safeguarding purposes.

Any alternative or preferred name used operationally within school will not replace information that the school is legally required to record accurately.

Personal information will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection legislation.

Information will only be shared with staff where there is a legitimate safeguarding, educational or operational reason for them to know.

Toilets:

The school will maintain appropriate single sex toilet provision in accordance with statutory requirements.

Pupils must not use toilets designated for the opposite biological sex.

Where a gender questioning pupil does not wish to use toilets designated for their biological sex, the school will consider appropriate alternative provision where available.

Alternative arrangements must not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the pupil or other pupils.

Changing Rooms and Showers:

Pupils must not be permitted to use changing rooms or shower facilities designated for the opposite biological sex.

Where a pupil does not wish to use the changing facilities designated for their biological sex, reasonable alternative arrangements should be considered where possible – such as changing at an alternative time.

Alternative arrangements must protect the safety, privacy, comfort and dignity of all pupils.

PE and Sport:

The school wants every pupil to participate positively in PE and sport.

Where safety requires a sport or activity to operate on a single-sex basis, pupils will participate according to biological sex and exceptions will not be made where doing so would compromise safety.

Where there is no safety concern, requests relating to participation will be considered individually in accordance with this policy, taking into account:

- Safeguarding
- Fairness
- The pupil's best interests
- The impact on other pupils

- Relevant sporting guidance
- Equality Act obligations

Education Visits and Residential Activities:

The school will consider the individual needs of pupils when planning educational visits and residential activities.

Children of opposite biological sexes will not share overnight accommodation.

Where a pupil does not feel comfortable sharing accommodation with pupils of their biological sex, alternative arrangements should be considered where reasonably possible.

Any alternative arrangements must maintain the safety, privacy, dignity and comfort of all pupils.

Risk assessments will be completed where appropriate.

Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment:

The Rowans AP academy has zero tolerance for bullying or harassment directed towards a pupil because they are questioning their gender, because of their sex, perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or any other protected characteristic.

This includes:

- Name calling
- Discriminatory language
- Online abuse
- Threats
- Intimidation
- Deliberate humiliation
- Unwanted disclosure of private information
- Physical or sexual harassment

Concerns will be addressed promptly under the school anti bullying policy and safeguarding policies.

At the same time the school recognises the rights of pupils and staff to hold different lawful religious or philosophical beliefs.

Respectful disagreement is not the same as bullying.

Pupils “Living in Stealth”:

A pupil may previously have socially transitioned to such an extent that peers or members of staff are unaware of their biological sex.

KCSIE 2026 identifies particular safeguarding considerations associated with children who are 'living in stealth'.

Where the school becomes aware of such circumstances, the **DSL must be involved**. The school will ensure that relevant staff have accurate information necessary to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities while protecting the pupil's privacy as far as reasonably possible.

Staff Responsibilities:

All staff must:

- Treat pupils respectfully
- Listen without judgement
- Avoid making assumptions
- Avoid attempting to diagnose pupils
- Avoid directing pupils towards a particular identity
- Challenge bullying and discriminatory behaviour
- Follow agreed school arrangements
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality
- Record and report safeguarding concerns
- Seek advice from the DSL or DDSL's when unsure

Individual staff members must not independently make arrangements relating to social transition outside the school's agreed procedures.

Staff Training:

Relevant staff will receive appropriate information and training so that they understand KCSIE 2026 requirements:

- Safeguarding responsibilities
- This policy and its decision-making process
- Confidentiality and information sharing
- Bullying and discrimination
- SEND and neurodiversity considerations
- Appropriate professional boundaries
- When matters must be referred to the DSL
- Staff should seek advice rather than making significant decisions individually.

Appendix 1 – Staff Response Flowchart

A pupil talks about questioning their gender



LISTEN CALMLY, RESPECTFULLY AND WITHOUT JUDGEMENT
Give the pupil time to speak • Do not make assumptions • Do not promise absolute confidentiality



ESTABLISH WHAT THE PUPIL IS TELLING YOU

Sharing thoughts / feelings only?

- Listen and provide appropriate pastoral support.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
- Follow safeguarding procedures if wellbeing or safety concerns arise.

Requesting changes / social transition?

- Do not agree to or implement changes independently.
- Refer to the designated senior leader / DSL in accordance with school policy.



IMMEDIATE SAFEGUARDING OR WELFARE CONCERNS?

YES → Refer immediately to the DSL and follow safeguarding procedures | **NO → Continue to individual assessment**



INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

Consider: pupil's wishes and feelings • age and developmental stage • parents/carers • safeguarding • SEND/neurodiversity • mental health and wellbeing • relevant professional/clinical information • impact on other pupils • equality and human rights obligations



PARENTS / CARERS INVOLVED AS A PRIORITY

Parents/carers should normally be involved. If there is a safeguarding concern, the DSL must consider whether contacting them could place the pupil at greater risk of harm.



DECISION MADE AND RATIONALE RECORDED



AGREED ARRANGEMENTS COMMUNICATED ONLY TO THOSE WHO NEED TO KNOW



REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS REGULARLY

Staff should follow the school's safeguarding procedures and relevant policy at all times.