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| Site logo image | Transgender Trend posted: " Some details of the proposed Department for Education (DfE) transgender guidance for schools have been published by the Sunday Times and The Telegraph this week. There are some promising proposals here but it is inconsistent on certain issues. DfE gu" [**Transgender Trend**](https://www.transgendertrend.com)  |

[The gender affirmative model and social transition in schools](https://public-api.wordpress.com/bar/?stat=groovemails-events&bin=wpcom_email_click&redirect_to=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.transgendertrend.com%2Fgender-affirmative-model-social-transition-schools%2F&sr=0&signature=33cf70cf4662dcc98e862ae94e5bc84a&blog_id=99364550&user=6ac409c1d9f6feed27719e267d610dc7&_e=eyJlcnJvciI6bnVsbCwiYmxvZ19pZCI6OTkzNjQ1NTAsImJsb2dfbGFuZyI6ImVuIiwic2l0ZV9pZF9sYWJlbCI6ImpldHBhY2siLCJoYXNfZmVhdHVyZWRfaW1hZ2UiOiIwIiwiX3VpIjoiNmFjNDA5YzFkOWY2ZmVlZDI3NzE5ZTI2N2Q2MTBkYzciLCJfdXQiOiJhbm9uIiwiZW1haWxfZG9tYWluIjoicmNhZGMub3JnIiwicG9zdF9pZCI6MjcwMzcsImRhdGVfc2VudCI6IjIwMjMtMDQtMTgiLCJlbWFpbF9pZCI6ImFkMjM4ODM5OTE1NzczYWFiNDFhYTk3OTExNGJlN2NiIiwiZW1haWxfbmFtZSI6Im5ldy1wb3N0IiwidGVtcGxhdGUiOiJuZXctcG9zdCIsImxpbmtfZGVzYyI6InBvc3QtdXJsIiwiYW5jaG9yX3RleHQiOiJUaGUgZ2VuZGVyIGFmZmlybWF0aXZlIG1vZGVsIGFuZCBzb2NpYWwgdHJhbnNpdGlvbiBpblx1MDBhMHNjaG9vbHMiLCJfZHIiOm51bGwsIl9kbCI6IlwveG1scnBjLnBocD9zeW5jPTEmY29kZWM9ZGVmbGF0ZS1qc29uLWFycmF5JnRpbWVzdGFtcD0xNjgxODM2MDI5LjQ2MTgmcXVldWU9c3luYyZjZD0wLjAwMTEmcGQ9MC4wMDUxJnF1ZXVlX3NpemU9MyZidWZmZXJfaWQ9NjQzZWM3ZmQ2ZjQ2OSZzeW5jX2Zsb3dfdHlwZT1kZWRpY2F0ZWQmdGltZW91dD0yMCZob21lPWh0dHBzJTNBJTJGJTJGd3d3LnRyYW5zZ2VuZGVydHJlbmQuY29tJnNpdGV1cmw9aHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cudHJhbnNnZW5kZXJ0cmVuZC5jb20maWRjPTEmZm9yPWpldHBhY2smd3Bjb21fYmxvZ19pZD05OTM2NDU1MCIsIl9lbiI6IndwY29tX2VtYWlsX2NsaWNrIiwiX3RzIjoxNjgxODM2MDkxNjUzLCJicm93c2VyX3R5cGUiOiJwaHAtYWdlbnQiLCJfYXVhIjoid3Bjb20tdHJhY2tzLWNsaWVudC12MC4zIiwiX3VsIjpudWxsLCJibG9nX3R6IjoiMCIsInVzZXJfbGFuZyI6bnVsbH0&_z=z)

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A group of students in a classroom  Description automatically generated with low confidenceSome details of the proposed Department for Education (DfE) transgender guidance for schools have been [published by the Sunday Times](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/teachers-must-tell-parents-about-pupils-gender-changes-r3ch5qqwh) and [The Telegraph](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/17/single-sex-schools-can-reject-transgender-pupils/) this week. There are some promising proposals here but it is inconsistent on certain issues. DfE guidance should start from the recognition that the gender affirmative model is a political demand, not a clinically-developed, evidence-based approach.The DfE must decide if schools are to follow either an activist approach or an approach in line with normal standards of safeguarding. It can’t be a bit of both.The gender affirmative approach that led to harms at the Tavistock has become the established approach throughout society, including in schools. Schools have become the meeting ground of activism that directly targets children online and through schools resources and is directed at teachers through training from groups such as Stonewall.Schools are institutions of education and learning. Gender affirmation, whether through the social transition of children or the teaching of ‘gender identity’ as fact, is not education but indoctrination into a belief. The purpose of schools is not to provide gender affirming care. It is not children’s job to provide gender affirming care to classmates as a condition of their education.A school should create an environment of acceptance, it is not the school’s job to provide validation. Schools are not centres of gender transition and children are not the foot soldiers of a political movement.The draft proposals suggest that the government is tightening up guidance on some of the most contentious issues but still trying to please everyone. If guidance is confusing and inconsistent it will please no-one.The DfE needs to take the politics out of schools and focus on the issue as one of safeguarding children and balancing the rights of every child in the school. Policies need to be based not on ideology but on facts and reality.* We welcome the proposal that children will not be permitted to share changing or shower facilities with pupils of the opposite sex. This must also be the case for toilets and dormitories, for the dignity and privacy of all pupils and the safety of girls. Safeguarding of girls cannot be compromised by any lack of clarity in this area.
* We also welcome guidance that boys are not permitted to take part in girls’ sports, but there is no justification for relaxing the rules around non-contact sports. Girls deserve fairness and a level playing field in all sports. The female category exists for this purpose. Fairness, equality and inclusion is achieved in sport by the exclusion of males from the female category. It is not achieved by exclusion of girls from podium places and awards by boys who ‘identify’ as girls, or by demoralising and demotivating girls so that they self-exclude from their own sports.

Guidance from the DfE should be clear and unequivocal on these points.Social transitionThe DfE must not leave this issue up to individual schools, but provide clear guidance as a framework within which schools can adapt their existing safeguarding and behaviour management policies.* Both Cass and the NHS interim service specification were very cautious about social transition; in essence the conclusion was that evidence is lacking. In any case, it is outside the remit of the Cass Review and NHS policy reach to decide on policy affecting other children and their rights. This is the job of the Department for Education.
* Gender self-ID is an activist demand. It has no place in schools, which should be politically neutral. Children may self-identify as anything they like, but teachers and other children cannot be compelled to agree with that child’s belief.
* Use of ‘preferred pronouns’ is another political activist demand. Children should not be pulled into this kind of political activism in schools, or be compelled to unknowingly serve an activist agenda.
* Allowing a policy of ‘preferred pronouns’ can enable children to hold teachers to ransom and to bully their peers. A school cannot allow one child, but not others, to dictate the use of pronouns by their teachers and peers. This is unworkable in schools.
* Use of preferred pronouns is discriminatory towards neurodiverse, learning disabled or children with speech and language difficulties and those with protected beliefs.

The gender affirmative approachSocial transition is a key aspect of the gender affirmative approach. This is not a clinically-developed ‘best practice’ approach but a very recent capitulation to activist demands. It is based on a belief in ‘gender identity’, an unevidenced and incoherent idea about inner gendered feelings.The gender affirmative model is not in line with normal standards of paediatric care, as referenced in the Cass Interim report:[[1]](https://www.transgendertrend.com/gender-affirmative-model-social-transition-schools/#_ftn1)* Education professionals should not feel under pressure, as health professionals have, to socially affirm children against normal professional standards of practice:

‘1.14. Primary and secondary care staff have told us that they feel under pressure to adopt an unquestioning affirmative approach and that this is at odds with the standard process of clinical assessment and diagnosis that they have been trained to undertake in all other clinical encounters.’* The gender affirmative approach prevented differential diagnosis and led to diagnostic overshadowing at the Tavistock GIDS, which meant that other healthcare issues were missed:

‘1.18 From the point of entry to GIDS there appears to be predominantly an affirmative, non-exploratory approach, often driven by child and parent expectations and the extent of social transition that has developed due to the delay in service provision.’* Schools should not be facilitating an approach that risks cementing a child’s identity and the associated belief that medical intervention is the answer:

‘By the time they are seen in the GIDS clinic, they may feel very certain of their gender identity and be anxious to start hormone treatment as quickly as possible.’* Teachers should not be compelled to actively intervene in a child’s treatment when the effects may be significant and the approach is disputed and lacks an evidence base:

‘5.19. However, it is important to view [social transition] as an active intervention because it may have significant effects on the child or young person in terms of their psychological functioning. There are different views on the benefits versus the harms of early social transition. Whatever position one takes, it is important to acknowledge that it is not a neutral act, and better information is needed about outcomes.’Risks* The Tavistock has since published the results of a study which found that there are no mental health benefits to social transition.[[2]](https://www.transgendertrend.com/gender-affirmative-model-social-transition-schools/#_ftn2) Another recent study in Melbourne, Australia found that social transition during adolescence was associated with greater odds of adverse mental health outcomes.[[3]](https://www.transgendertrend.com/gender-affirmative-model-social-transition-schools/#_ftn3)
* The risks of social transition are outlined here by a clinical psychologist: Primary age children: ‘[A Childhood is not Reversible.](https://www.transgendertrend.com/childhood-social-transition/)’ Adolescents: ‘[When a Teenager says they’re Transgender.](https://www.transgendertrend.com/teenager-says-theyre-transgender/)’
* If a child is experiencing genuine distress, that is a matter for the professionals and should be dealt with in exactly the same way as a school would manage any other child with psychological/mental health issues. Policy in this area should not undermine the unambiguous advice for schools and colleges, as set out in statutory DfE guidance, that in relation to mental health issues:

‘School and college staff are not expected to, and should not, diagnose mental health conditions or perform mental health interventions.’[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support-in-schools-and-college](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support-in-schools-and-colleges) * Intervening in a child’s development, in an area where teachers are unqualified, puts teachers at professional risk and also risks making mental health issues worse for the child.
* Schools should not be the starting point of the gender affirmative care pathway that leads from affirmation to social transition to medical intervention.
* The groups of children most likely to be on this pathway are adolescent girls, autistic children, gay and lesbian adolescents, children in the care system and those with mental health problems. Unquestioning affirmation of these most vulnerable groups is negligence.

Impact on other pupilsWhile much attention has been paid, over the last few years, to the medical experiment on children experiencing gender-related distress, there has been little concern about the social experiment of gender affirmation on the child, or on all the children around that child, whether siblings or classmates at school.  * Gender affirmation politicises not just the gender distressed child, but every other child in the school. Once a school classes just one boy as a ‘transgender girl’ then every other girl in the school becomes a ‘cisgender girl.’ Any girl who feels she doesn’t conform to feminine stereotypes is compelled through this model to self-identify as non-binary. There is no space – and no flag – for the girl who does not conform to sex role stereotypes in the gender identity model.
* Cass described social transition as an active intervention which may have significant effects on the child’s psychological functioning. The psychological effects on the children being asked to socially transition a fellow pupil have not been calculated. This is a responsibility children are not developmentally equipped to carry and it is not appropriate to ask them to do so; it is irrelevant whether this is for ten other children in the school or just one.
* We do not know the harms that may be caused to individual children being asked by their school to deny biological reality and pretend it doesn’t exist.
* Schools cannot tell children that one boy is a girl but another boy isn’t. There are no grounds on which a school can justify affirming one adolescent girl as a boy while refusing to do the same for another, other than by revealing private medical details for the affirmed child.
* Schools cannot rely on a doctor’s report when there are plenty of ‘gender affirming’ clinicians and therapists who would advise social transition without question.
* Compelling girls to agree that a boy is a girl puts girls at risk outside the school environment by training them to suppress their instincts, knowledge and understanding of the reality of who is male in order to ‘be kind.’

 The watchful waiting approach* The previously established model of care for children with gender-related distress/cross-sex identity was ‘watchful waiting.’ Children were not socially transitioned but allowed to grow up and the majority naturally outgrew these childhood feelings.
* There has been no research that has demonstrated that the watchful waiting model caused harms to children, to justify its replacement with the gender affirmative approach.
* Watchful waiting is a politically neutral approach.
* This approach carries no risks. A school that fosters a tolerant approach to diversity should have a zero tolerance approach to bullying of any child for being different, including the boys with long hair who play with dolls and the girls with short hair who play football. Treating these children as the opposite sex is a reinforcement of stereotypes and an intolerance of difference.
* A watchful waiting approach enables a school to be tolerant and flexible on gender expression and gender roles and to be supportive without lying to children about their sex.
* Whatever the outcome in adulthood, all children deserve honesty from adults and no child benefits from disassociation from reality during childhood.
* A watchful waiting approach does not risk creating unrealistic expectations of the wider society where not everybody will share the child’s beliefs that they are the opposite sex.

If this issue is left up to the judgment of individual schools, school policies will continue to be dictated by the activist member of staff or the crusading parent, or by political lobby groups, as detailed in the Policy Exchange report [Asleep at the Wheel](https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Asleep-at-the-Wheel.pdf). There should be no loopholes in the Department for Education guidance that permit political activist policies in schools.Download our briefing [Gender Affirmation v Watchful Waiting in Schools](https://www.transgendertrend.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Briefing-Gender-affirmation-v-watchful-waiting-in-schools.pdf).[[1]](https://www.transgendertrend.com/gender-affirmative-model-social-transition-schools/#_ftnref1) <https://cass.independent-review.uk/publications/interim-report/>[[2]](https://www.transgendertrend.com/gender-affirmative-model-social-transition-schools/#_ftnref2)<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-023-02588-5>[[3]](https://www.transgendertrend.com/gender-affirmative-model-social-transition-schools/#_ftnref3)<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/article-abstract/2800899ghjkl>  |

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