

Elham Church of England Primary School

Creating lifelong learners guided by God's teaching.



Guidance for Supporting Children who are Questioning their Gender

September 2026

Our School Vision

At Elham, we instill a deep sense of **faith**, hope, and purpose, encouraging our pupils to act with **empathy** and serve others with love. We believe that every child is a unique gift from God, with their own potential to flourish and grow. Guided by Christian faith and love, our school is a nurturing community where **all are welcomed**, valued, and inspired to aim high, act with compassion, and live with integrity.

We are committed to **achievement for all**, ensuring that every child—regardless of background or starting point—is supported, challenged and ambitious to thrive. We are guided by a belief in encouraging children to dream boldly and persevere with purpose. Learning is our purpose and commitment.

We are a **community**, deeply rooted in our rural location. We are here for our children and their families, and we recognise the central role we play as a part of our village.

Through a broad, rich and inclusive curriculum, we help our children grow into confident, kind, and thoughtful individuals who make a positive difference in the world.

Our Narrative

New Living Translation John 6:5-14 Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

5 Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" 6 He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.

7 Philip replied, "Even if we worked for months, we wouldn't have enough money^[a] to feed them!" 8 Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. 9 "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?"

10 "Tell everyone to sit down," Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the

people. Afterwards he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. 12 After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, "Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted." 13 So they picked up

the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves. 14 When the people saw him^[b] do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!"^[c]

Purpose and Scope

1.1 Introduction

The following guidance outlines **Elham Church of England Primary School's approach to supporting children who may be questioning or exploring their gender**. It explains how the school will respond in a way that safeguards and promotes the welfare of the child and all other children.

This guidance should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Department for Education's *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE)*. This guidance is a supporting document only and does not replace or supersede the school's safeguarding policy, statutory duties or national guidance.

The school will consider each situation individually and in the best interests of the child. However, individual consideration does not mean that the school can make

exceptions to requirements concerning single-sex facilities, residential accommodation or single-sex sport where these are required by law or KCSIE.

2. Principles and terminology

The school will:

- treat every child with dignity, kindness and respect;
- listen carefully to children and take their views and feelings seriously;
- avoid making assumptions about a child's identity based on interests, clothing, appearance or behaviour;
- recognise that children may explore aspects of their identity as part of growing up;
- consider the child's welfare and best interests alongside the wellbeing, safety and rights of other children;
- maintain appropriate flexibility and avoid unnecessary gender stereotyping;
- have regard to its safeguarding duties and its obligations under relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*, the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

For the purposes of this guidance, **gender questioning** refers to circumstances in which a child is questioning or exploring their gender or how they feel about being a boy or a girl.

The term **social transition** refers to changes intended to enable a child to present socially as the opposite sex. This may include requests relating to names, pronouns, uniform or appearance. KCSIE 2026 makes clear that each element of social transition should be considered carefully in light of the school's safeguarding duties and the child's best interests.

The school recognises that a child questioning their gender is not, in itself, a safeguarding concern. However, the circumstances of some children questioning their gender may involve additional vulnerabilities or safeguarding concerns which

require consideration. Any safeguarding concerns identified will be managed in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026, which should be read alongside this guidance.

The school will use terminology relating to sex and gender in accordance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*, relevant legislation and current statutory guidance.

3. Responding when a child questions their gender

The school will not initiate action regarding a child's gender.

If a child speaks to a member of staff about their feelings, the member of staff should listen calmly and respectfully. Staff should not make assumptions, encourage a particular outcome or attempt to provide clinical advice.

Where a child simply wishes to talk about their feelings and is not asking the school to make changes, staff should respect the child's confidence unless there is a safeguarding reason to share the information.

Where a child or parent/carers asks the school to make changes to support social transition, the matter should be referred to the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

In reaching a decision, the school will consider:

- the child's best interests, welfare and safeguarding needs;
- the wellbeing, safety, privacy and dignity of other children who may be affected;
- the child's age, maturity and stage of development;
- any relevant information provided by the child's parents/carers;
- any relevant advice from appropriately qualified health or clinical professionals;

- advice from other appropriate professionals within the school, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO);
- any relevant SEND, neurodiversity, health or other individual circumstances;
- the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998;
- the potential impact of the requested change on the child and on other members of the school community; and
- whether any school policy or practice places the child at a disadvantage and, where this is the case, whether the policy or practice is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The school will consider whether there are alternative ways of achieving the legitimate aim which would have a lesser impact on the child or others affected.

Where it is unclear whether a child has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, the school will proceed on the basis that the child may have that protected characteristic and will consider its relevant Equality Act duties accordingly.

Any decision will be based on the individual circumstances of the child and the circumstances of the request. The fact that a child has asked for a particular change does not, in itself, mean that the school is required to agree to it.

The school will explain decisions to the child and their parents/carers in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. Significant decisions and the reasons for them will be recorded and kept under review.

4. Social transition

The school will take a **very careful approach** to requests for support with social transition.

KCSIE 2026 states that social transition should be regarded as an active intervention and that there is limited evidence about its long-term impact. It therefore expects primary schools to exercise particular caution, **with support for full social transition expected to be agreed only very rarely.**

Where a family is considering social transition for a pre-pubertal child, the school will encourage appropriate clinical advice. School staff will not attempt to provide clinical advice themselves.

The school will seek to maintain flexibility and keep options open for children rather than encouraging them to make decisions which may feel irreversible.

Any decision will be based on the circumstances of the individual child and will not simply reflect the child's request or the wishes of another individual.

5. Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers have the leading role in the lives of their children. The school will therefore involve parents/carers as a matter of priority where a child asks the school to support social transition.

The school will normally seek to work collaboratively with the child and their parents/carers to determine what is in the child's best interests.

In the rare circumstances where involving parents/carers may place a child at greater risk of harm, the school will first consult the DSL and determine what action is required to safeguard the child.

The school may seek advice from appropriately qualified professionals where this would assist decision-making.

6. Safeguarding and vulnerability

The school will remain alert to the possibility that a child questioning their gender may have wider vulnerabilities or complex needs.

These may include:

- difficulties within family or peer relationships;
- anxiety or other mental health or psychosocial needs;
- discriminatory or other bullying;
- online risks;
- SEND or neurodiversity;
- other experiences which may affect the child's welfare.

Questioning gender does not itself indicate that a child is at risk of harm. However, any safeguarding concern identified through conversations or decision-making will be managed through the school's usual safeguarding procedures.

KCSIE 2026 highlights particular safeguarding considerations for children who have fully socially transitioned from an early age and may be “**living in stealth**”, meaning that other pupils and/or staff may be unaware of their biological sex.

The school will be particularly conscious of the potential vulnerabilities of children in these circumstances. Where a child may be living in stealth, the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be involved**.

The school will ensure that relevant staff are aware of a child's biological sex where this is necessary for them to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. The school will also ensure that a child's biological sex is recorded accurately wherever it is legally required to be recorded.

Information about a child's biological sex will be handled sensitively and shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know it in order to fulfil their safeguarding, educational or operational responsibilities.

The fact that a child may be living in stealth will not, in itself, be treated as evidence that the child is at risk of harm. However, the school will remain alert to the specific vulnerabilities identified in KCSIE 2026 and will consider whether any additional safeguarding or welfare support is required.

7. Names and pronouns

Requests to change the name or pronouns used for a child will be considered as part of any wider request for support with social transition.

The school will not automatically agree to a requested change. It will consider the request in accordance with the principles and decision-making process set out in this guidance.

The school will also take account of the rights of other children and staff, including rights relating to religion or belief.

Where appropriate, the school may consider practical approaches such as using a child's name rather than pronouns.

Any agreed arrangement will be clearly communicated to relevant staff and reviewed as necessary.

8. Uniform and appearance

The school will apply its uniform and appearance requirements consistently and fairly.

A child questioning their gender may choose from items permitted under the school's uniform policy, but the school will not create a separate uniform arrangement solely to facilitate social transition.

The school will avoid unnecessary gender stereotyping and will consider whether existing uniform arrangements provide reasonable flexibility for all children.

9. Toilets and single-sex facilities

The school provides and maintains single-sex toilet facilities in accordance with its legal and safeguarding duties.

Children must not use toilets designated for the opposite biological sex, including where the school is responding to a request to support social transition.

The school must provide separate toilets for boys and girls aged 8 and over, subject to the exceptions for individual, lockable toilets set out in the relevant regulations and KCSIE.

Where a child does not wish to use the toilet designated for their biological sex, the school will consider whether an appropriate alternative facility can be provided.

Any alternative arrangement must not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the child or of other children, or undermine the provision of single-sex facilities.

Where the school makes such an arrangement, it will be recorded, communicated appropriately and reviewed regularly.

10. Changing rooms and showers

The school will maintain appropriate arrangements for changing and washing which protect children's safety, privacy, comfort and dignity.

A child aged 11 or over at the start of the school year must not be required to undress in front of a child of the opposite biological sex.

Children must not access changing rooms designated for the opposite sex as part of any arrangement to support social transition.

Where a child does not wish to use the changing or washing facilities designated for their biological sex, the school will consider whether an appropriate alternative can be provided.

An alternative might include a fully enclosed facility for individual use or, where practicable, access at an alternative time.

Any alternative arrangement must not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the child or of other children.

Any such arrangement will be recorded, communicated appropriately and reviewed regularly.

11. PE, physical activity and sport

The school is committed to ensuring that all children have appropriate opportunities to participate in PE, physical activity and sport.

The school will consider whether an activity needs to be organised on a single-sex basis. In some sports, single-sex participation may be necessary to protect the safety of children because of differences in physical strength, stamina or physique. Where single-sex participation is necessary for safety, there will be **no exceptions**.

Where single-sex participation is not necessary for safety, the school may nevertheless consider whether separate provision is appropriate to ensure fairness. In these circumstances, any request from a child who is questioning their gender to participate in a different sex category will be considered on an individual basis, in accordance with the decision-making process set out in Section 3.

In making decisions about participation, the school will consider:

- the safety and wellbeing of all children;
- the best interests of the child making the request;
- the fairness of participation for all children;

- the nature of the activity and the physical differences relevant to it;
- the impact on other children participating in the activity;
- any relevant guidance from the governing body or sporting organisation; and
- the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

The school will explain any decision sensitively and in an age-appropriate manner. Where participation in a particular sex category is not possible, the school will consider whether an alternative arrangement can be made that enables the child to participate appropriately without compromising the safety, wellbeing or fairness of the activity.

Where the school has determined that single-sex participation is necessary for safety, an alternative arrangement will not include participation in the opposite sex category.

12. Residential trips and overnight accommodation

The school does not permit a child to share overnight accommodation with a child of the opposite biological sex.

Supporting social transition will not include access to boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex.

When allocating dormitories, tents or shared rooms, the school will consider safeguarding duties, the Equality Act 2010 and any relevant regulations or standards.

If a child does not wish to share accommodation with another child of the same biological sex, the school will consider whether an alternative arrangement is possible.

Any alternative arrangement must not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of any child.

13. Bullying, harassment and peer relationships

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and discriminatory behaviour.

This includes bullying or harassment relating to a child's gender questioning, perceived gender, sex, sexual orientation or any other protected or personal characteristic.

Concerns will be addressed promptly in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and safeguarding procedures.

The school will also recognise that children and staff may hold different religious or philosophical beliefs. Respectful disagreement or the expression of a lawful belief will not, in itself, constitute bullying or harassment.

All members of the school community are expected to treat one another with dignity and respect.

14. Confidentiality and information sharing

Children may speak to trusted members of staff about their feelings without asking the school to make changes.

Where there is no safeguarding concern and no request for action, staff should respect the child's confidence.

Where a child requests support with social transition, the school will normally involve their parents/carers.

Information will be shared only with those who need it for legitimate safeguarding, educational or operational purposes and in accordance with the school's safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection procedures.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, the child's safety and welfare will take priority and the school's normal safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Relevant staff must have access to accurate information about a child's biological sex where this is necessary to fulfil the school's safeguarding duties. The school will ensure that biological sex is recorded accurately wherever it is legally required to be recorded.

15. Record keeping and review

The school will maintain clear records of significant requests, decisions and arrangements relating to support for a child who is questioning their gender.

Records will explain:

- the request or concern raised;
- relevant information considered;
- the safeguarding and best-interests considerations;
- the involvement of parents/carers and, where appropriate, professionals;
- the decision reached and the reasons for it;
- any arrangements put in place;
- any review date or circumstances which may require an earlier review.

Arrangements will be reviewed where circumstances or the needs of the child change, or where new safeguarding information becomes available.

The DSL should be involved immediately where a significant safeguarding concern emerges or where an existing arrangement requires reconsideration for safeguarding reasons.

The school will review this guidance at least annually and whenever there is a significant change in relevant legislation, statutory guidance or school practice.

Where a child who has previously socially transitioned wishes to reverse or change that arrangement, the school will provide appropriate support and work with the child, parents/carers and relevant professionals where appropriate.

16. Relevant legislation and DfE guidance

This guidance should be read alongside:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026* (Department for Education);
- *Equality Act 2010*;
- *Human Rights Act 1998*;
- *School Premises (England) Regulations 2012*;
- *Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014*, where applicable;
- relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance;
- the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- the school's Behaviour Policy;
- the school's Equality Policy.

The school will keep this guidance under review to ensure that it remains consistent with the law and current Department for Education guidance.

This guidance was approved by the Governing Body on 2nd September 2026.

Signed: Date:.....
(Chair of Governors)

Signed:..... Date:.....
(Headteacher)