



10 tips for Working with Trans Students



1. Education, Education, Education

Training for all staff (because not all trans students will be known to you) and governors, from trans-led agencies. Gender diversity talked about competently and in a non-pathologising way in classes such as PHSE, psychology and sociology. Trans people visible - on posters, in the curriculum, books in the library.

2. Celebrate trans people and gender diversity

Don't tolerate, celebrate! Champion anything that challenges gender stereotypes and remember to talk about the trans community during LGBT History month. Share words and images of how gender and gender diversity is expressed differently in different cultures across the world.

3. Reduce gender segregation

With sports, toilets, dress codes and roles there are often ways around the traditional way of doing things. Don't wait for a trans or non-binary student to show up before you make those changes, because they will benefit everyone and undermine sexism. But allow trans students to use facilities for their identified gender.

4. Be conscious of what story your language tells

Be aware of the diversity of language, stories and experience that exist within the trans community. Learn what language hurts or fails to describe trans people. Gender neutral language is a must; find alternatives to expressions like "boys and girls". Assume nothing about the gender of the person/group you are addressing.

5. Don't "out" trans people

Be clear with a trans student exactly what they want shared and with whom. Consider ways in which they could be accidentally outed - e.g. in letters home. Ensure historic name changes and other details do not resurface to expose transitioned students. Know your duties under equality and data protection law.

6. Use inclusive admin systems

Use best practice guidance for monitoring forms and where gender needs to be asked. If a student cannot legally change their name yet, make sure their "known as" name is used. A deed poll is a legal document - accept it. Alert students to potential issues with exams and certificates - think ahead, and draw up protocols.

7. Rethink Safeguarding

Focus on the known safeguarding risk (high risk of abuse and suicide for the trans person, due to social isolation and stigma) rather than imagined risk (trans person somehow overcoming their social marginalisation enough to have the power to harm other students). Peer support & inclusion are essential.

8. Zero tolerance for misgendering and transphobia

Set a continuous tone of accepting and including trans people, even if trans students are not visible. Act swiftly in response to any transphobia, don't let it slide. Actively correct any misnaming or misgendering - if it's you, apologise and move on quickly. Don't make a big deal about it.

9. Use a person-centred approach

Trans People are the experts on their own lives, and their stories are diverse. Listen. Take the time to find out what feels safe and comfortable to the trans person. Don't make assumptions, and don't assume you know better.

10. No gatekeeping

Just allow the trans person to live as they want to live, and make the necessary signposting/ referrals as quickly as possible. Unless you're a highly qualified expert on trans people, it is probably best not to make your own judgement about them or try to intervene in the process they are undergoing.