



# **Belmayne Educate Together Secondary School**

**Roll Number 68346 T**

**Belmayne Avenue**

**Dublin 13**

## **LGBTQ+ Support Policy**

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## Rationale

In the Belmayne ETSS school community we strive to create an environment where all students feel accepted, included, welcomed, safe and treated fairly by everyone, regardless of family status, religion, disability, race and sexual orientation. LGBTQ+ students will be treated no differently to any other students. Our policy is informed by the following:

INTO have a LGBTQ+ Teachers group and they have resources on their website and social media accounts:

<https://www.into.ie/about/our-structure/associated-groups/into-LGBTQ+-teachers-group/>

[https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2019/10/LGBTQ+\\_InclusiveGuidelines.pdf](https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2019/10/LGBTQ+_InclusiveGuidelines.pdf)

‘BEING LGBTQ+ IN SCHOOL’ A Resource for Post-Primary Schools to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying and Support LGBTQ+ Students (GLEN, 2016)

<https://assets.gov.ie/24762/729f5d8906184a6a8c4be0c5e2a349dd.pdf>

Our Positive Behaviour for Learning policy states that homophobic, racist or inflammatory comments are unacceptable in the school. If a student is struggling with any LGBTQ+I issues and is brought to your attention please let one of the following know:

- Student Relations 1st - Andrew Gallagher
- Student Relations 3rd & 5th Year - Cillian Carroll
- Deputy Principal - Ian Whelan
- Principal - Ashling Kenevey

We will then collaborate further in relation to said student, look at the student’s individual story , investigate and discuss the best way forward during our care team meetings.

## Procedure for staff to follow

The following are guidelines that we will instil, where feasible, as a staff going forward.

We recognise, of course, that students are individuals and these guidelines must be flexible and information treated sensitively and on an individual basis, depending on the particular student involved.

## How should the school respond if a young person comes out?

Most young people come out to a friend or another trusted individual before coming out to family. Sometimes this trusted individual is a teacher or a Guidance Counsellor. All staff members need to be prepared for the possibility of a student coming out and the following points will support preparations:

- Schools should communicate a message to all students that diversity is welcomed and respected. LGBTQ+ young people and other minority groups should be clear that they are valued, and that the school leadership will ensure their safety and support. It is critical that a young LGBTQ+ person discovering their sexual orientation or gender identity feels supported and valued, regardless of whether or not they come out.
- Only if school authorities have legitimate cause for concern for the student's safety should engagement with the student's parents/guardians be made without consulting the student. Often a young person experiences intense fear of rejection by his/her family and consequently finds it easier to come out to others first. A positive experience of coming out to others, where they are met with acceptance, is critical to safeguarding the young person's mental health and well-being; it can also lessen the young person's fear of disclosing to his/her family and friends (Mayock et al, 2009).

When a young person comes out as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender they are disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is a statement about an aspect of the student's identity and should not be interpreted as an indication of sexual behaviour.

- The requirements under the Children First Guidelines (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011, s7.16.2) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2011) relating to sexual activity apply to all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Note the legal age of consent to sexual activity is 17 years.
- The school should also consider other aspects of identity that might be relevant to a student coming out, for example culture, religion or disability.
- Individual teachers have a significant role in responding to a student who comes out to them.

## What about the student who is perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?

In many schools today anti-gay namecalling is a regular occurrence and students frequently use expressions such as 'you're so gay' or 'that's so gay' in derisive and pejorative ways. Many students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, are vulnerable to such name-calling because some aspect of their identity is deemed to be objectionable, such as their appearance, interests,

physical characteristics or family background. This does not mean that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, all students have a right to participate in a safe, supportive and affirming learning environment. The impact of such name-calling for all students is damaging, for LGBTQ+ young people or those questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity it is particularly harmful to their self-esteem and self-worth. Some students may be targeted for such harassment, bullying and name-calling because of an assumption that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Unlike other aspects of identity, sexual orientation is not necessarily a visible or apparent attribute; as with transgender identity, it is up to the individual to come to an understanding of his/her identity. Therefore, it is important that students are not asked about their sexual orientation or gender identity unless they volunteer such information themselves. Equally it should not be assumed that a young person who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is necessarily troubled by their sexual orientation or gender identity.

It is essential to address the behaviour of the student(s) targeting a vulnerable student and to protect the student being bullied from further harassment. Responding to such bullying presents an opportunity to provide leadership to the whole-school community by reinforcing the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy

The following behaviours are not acceptable at Belmayne ETSS and staff should address this immediately with students concerned

- Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation
- Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation
- Name calling
- Intimidation and harassment of any kind, verbally, physically or online

## How to respond if a student comes out as Transgender?

Whilst the school community may find the transition of a transgender student initially challenging, it is critically important to the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of that young person that they are treated with dignity, respect and fairness for his or her preferred gender identity. For example, where a student who says she is a girl and wishes to be regarded that way throughout the school day and other areas of her life, should be respected and treated like a girl. So too with a student who says he is a boy and wishes to be regarded that way throughout the school day and other areas of his life. Such a student should be respected and treated like a boy. Students who identify as intersex or gender non-binary will have varying needs of support.

It is good practice to ascertain what supports they need on an individual basis and, where possible, to negotiate those supports between the student, their family and the school to try to reach an agreement that is fair and respectful to all. If relevant, the school should work with the student and his or her parents/guardians to devise a 'transition plan'. To prevent transphobic bullying this plan should be communicated sensitively and appropriately to the school community. It presents an

opportunity to engage in awareness raising educational activities that build understanding and empathy.

**If a student discloses that they would like their name changed officially on VSWARE, parents consent is needed. Staff and students will be informed in a gentle, sensitive manner and in consultation with the student in question. There is an option in VSWare to change the *Preferred Name* in the student details tab.**

A school may change the name of a student on the Post-Primary Online Database (P-Pod). Currently it is not possible for a student without a gender recognition certificate to have his/her gender marker amended on this online database. Where a student has a gender recognition certificate it is not necessary for a school to obtain the certificate in order for the gender on the online database to be changed. In the case of a student in a state examination year (Junior or Leaving Certificate) it may be necessary for the principal to contact the State Examinations Commission (SEC) to request a name change on his/her behalf in order that the state examination certificate that is issued reflects the preferred name of the student. The SEC deals with each case individually in consultation with the principal. It may also be necessary for a student in Leaving Certificate year to have his/her Central Applications Office (CAO) form amended in order to ensure consistency of name usage.

#### **Change of name by deed poll**

It is possible for a young person under the age of 18 years to change their name by deed poll with the consent of their parents/guardians. A change of name by deed poll provides official documentary evidence that a person has changed their name legally and the deed poll, along with a birth certificate, is a legal document and acceptable for most administrative purposes.

**If a student wants to be referred to using a different name / nickname, which may be LGBTQ+ related, by peers and teachers in the school, this will be discussed by the Principal, Deputy Principal and guidance counsellor at our care team meeting. If a student does not want to disclose to parents about their preferred name, this will be discussed further with the guidance counsellor with time and advice given to the student in question.**

#### **Single-gender activities**

To the extent possible, best practice suggests schools should reduce or eliminate the separation of students by gender during school activities. In situations where this is necessary, such as for certain SPHE classes, transgender students should be included in the group that corresponds with their preferred gender identity. Where feasible, and within the resources available, schools should offer varied programmes which address a wide range of interests and aptitudes.

#### **Physical Education and sport**

Physical Education (PE) is an important area of the second-level curriculum. It is intrinsically linked with maintaining physical and mental health and overall wellbeing. All students, including transgender students have the same right to physical education and sport as other young people and should be encouraged to participate in sport and physical education. Research in the USA (GLSEN, 2013) has found that many LGBTQ+ students reported that discrimination prevented them from participating in sports fully and safely. According to this research interest shown by trans students to

participate in sport according to their preferred gender was often seen as 'disruptive' by school officials. Additionally, the research identified practices that particularly hindered transgender students' participation, such as requiring students to use changing rooms based on a student's sex assigned at birth. The nature of contact and physicality of sports such as rugby, soccer or GAA may require some schools to consider individual cases separately. All schools should encourage and facilitate all students to participate in sports according to their interests and without impediment according to their gender identity. Where a student, or a team in which the student is a member, is competing at a very high level the school may need to consider individual cases separately with due regard for player safety. A useful online reference resource lists policies from a wide range of sports and international sporting bodies. The URL for the website is [www.transathlete.com](http://www.transathlete.com)

### **School trips, Activities, Toilets and changing rooms**

All students should feel safe and supported when accessing toilet and changing facilities. School trips where changing rooms are required and activities such as swimming, transgender students will be approached on an individual basis, the facilities discussed and an agreement made on what the student would prefer in relation to accommodation, changing facilities etc. Transgender students should be able to access toilet and changing facilities that correspond with their gender identity. If a student transitions during the course of their time in school a member of the student support team or equivalent should consult with the student as to how he or she wishes to access these facilities. The transition plan should include reference to toilets and changing facilities. Being able to access gender neutral toilets may be particularly important during transition; gender neutral toilets might be provided by re-naming a disability toilet as a unisex toilet/changing facility. While some transgender students will want this arrangement, others will not be comfortable with it and consequently these students should be provided with a safe and adequate alternative, such as a single 'unisex' toilet facility where this is possible. This should not be a staff toilet facility. The use of toilet and changing facilities often causes most debate around the inclusion of transgender students. Other students and their families may feel uncomfortable with a transgender student using the same gender-specific facilities. This discomfort may be rooted in an unfounded assumption of inappropriate behaviour on the part of the student who is transgender and consequently it is not a reason to deny access to the transgender student. However, it is important to address this discomfort and to foster understanding of gender identity in order to create a school culture that respects and values all students and prevents transphobic bullying.

## **Transition plan**

When a student expresses the wish to attend school in his or her preferred gender it is advisable that a plan for the transition process is set out in line with the student's wishes, needs and concerns. A transition plan should be set out by the student and a member of the student support team or equivalent. The staff person will ideally be someone who the student is comfortable with; examples include the class tutor, year head, and guidance counsellor or school chaplain. Where possible, parents/guardians should also be involved in setting out the transition plan. The transition plan should address precise details for each aspect of transition, including an exact timeframe for when each transition will take place. It may be appropriate to invite an expert on transgender identity from an external group to provide support to the student and school in devising and implementing the

transition plan. It is also important to consider how the transition will be communicated to the school community to prevent transphobic bullying. More information on creating a transition plan can be found here: [729f5d8906184a6a8c4be0c5e2a349dd.pdf \(assets.gov.ie\)](#)

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