

The James Young High School LGBTQ+ Strategy

June 2023

We strive to make The James Young High School a safe and inclusive place for all where diversity is not only respected but celebrated. Schools have a duty to promote the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in their care, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils, and those experiencing homophobic, biphobic or transphobic (HBT) bullying.

We are committed to promoting a positive and diverse culture in which all people are valued and supported to fulfil their potential, irrespective of their age, disability, race, religion or belief, gender-reassignment, sex, or sexual orientation.

This strategy upholds the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC is a universal treaty which covers all aspects of a child's life and sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. The James Young High School is committed to embedding a rights based approach, and this strategy is particularly relevant to Articles 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17 (see Appendix 1).

We recognise our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and are committed to promoting the equality and diversity of all those we work with, including our employees, learners/young people, and visitors.

We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, bullying and harassment and will make every effort to comply with the requirements of the Act and its subsequent provisions.

Equality Act 2010

Schools are required to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender reassignment. This includes tackling HBT bullying. Schools are also required to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This means that schools should go beyond tackling HBT bullying and take proactive steps to promote respect and understanding of LGBTQ+ people and issues.

The school aims...

- to provide an inclusive environment in which LGBTQ+ pupils, families and staff are valued and respected.
- to promote understanding and support the needs of LGBTQ+ pupils, families and staff.
- to improve LGBTQ+ awareness, visibility and issues through the provision of an inclusive curriculum.
- to monitor and tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language and bullying.
- to promote opportunities for non-LGBTQ+ students to act as allies

The school seeks to achieve these aims...

- by ensuring that school strategies and practices are inclusive and supportive of LGBTQ+ people and explicitly state that HBT language and bullying are unacceptable.
- by providing training to staff in supporting LGBTQ+ pupils, developing an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum and tackling HBT language and bullying.
- by providing support structures and information/resources to LGBTQ+ pupils on LGBTQ+ issues and support services.
- by providing pupils with LGBTQ+ inclusive Relationships and Sex Education, opportunities to discuss gender identity and sexuality, and including LGBTQ+ people and themes in the Personal and Social Education (PSE) and wider curriculum where relevant.
- by providing ways for pupils to report HBT language and bullying, monitoring (including through staff and pupil surveys) and recording HBT language and bullying, as well as ensuring that pupils are aware that HBT language and bullying are wrong.
- by ensuring that the school library contains books with LGBTQ+ themes and that assemblies, projects or displays which celebrate diversity or tackle bullying are LGBTQ+ inclusive.
- by maintaining an inclusive, gender-neutral school dress code.
- by ensuring that gendered aspects of school life are avoided where possible.
- by participating in the LGBT Youth Scotland School Charter Mark programme and continuing to liaise with LGBT Youth Scotland as and when appropriate
- by nominating a member of staff as the school LGBTQ+ lead to monitor the implementation of this strategy and provide training and additional support and advice to pupils and staff.

Identities and “Coming Out”

Being LGBTQ+ is not a child protection issue or wellbeing concern in itself. However, staff can talk to others if what they say would not specifically identify a young person or breach their confidentiality. A young person may not have told their family about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Inadvertent disclosure could cause needless stress for the young person or could put them at risk. Therefore, it is best for individuals not to disclose information to parents or carers unless there is a clear safeguarding issue, in which case the usual child protection guidelines should be followed.

We recognise all LGBTQ+ identities at The James Young High School and we do not deny the existence of a valid identity. We will also not question an identity or deny it as a “phase”. In particular, we recognise the existence of people who identify as:

- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Cisgender
- Gay
- Gender fluid
- Heterosexual (Straight)
- Intersex
- Lesbian
- Non-binary
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Transgender

(see Appendix 2 for definitions of these terms)

We also acknowledge that many people do not fit under specific labels. Others may be questioning their identity. We recognise gender and sexual orientation as spectra.

Transgender and non-binary pupils

We recognise that pupils who are transgender or non-binary can have specific needs. Thus, when any pupil comes out as transgender (including non-binary), we will consider:

- What they would like to happen.
- How they would like to be known in the school i.e. what name and pronouns they would like to use.
- What facilities (e.g. toilets, changing rooms etc.) they would feel most comfortable using and what arrangements can be put in place.
- Whether and how class teachers/school staff will be informed (with the permission of the pupil).
- Engagement with parent(s) and carer(s) and information the young person wishes to be shared.
- Signposting to GP surgery (young person may already have done this).
- Signposting to other relevant support (e.g. LGBTQ+ group, external agencies etc.)
- Name/identity changes on SEEMIS after appropriate discussions with those involved.
- Support for siblings and other family members if necessary.

In all cases, we will be led by the needs and views of the pupils. The document “Supporting Transgender Pupils In Schools - Guidance for Scottish Schools” (August 2021) will be used for further guidance if required and in particular the steps for good practice included in Appendix 3. We will also seek support from West Lothian Council Education Service where appropriate.

In all our decision making we will seek to balance the needs of those with protected characteristics. If a complaint is raised, we will take time to be proportionate and reasonable in our response, considering the issue raised carefully and any evidence of risk or detrimental impact on pupils.

Appendix 1 – Relevant Articles of the UNCRC

Article 12 (respect for the views of the child): Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

Article 13 (freedom of expression): Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 15 (freedom of association): Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 16 (right to privacy): Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life, including protecting children from unlawful attacks that harm their reputation.

Article 17 (access to information from the media): Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

Appendix 2 – Definitions of Terms

Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people can experience platonic attraction but may have no sexual desire or need within their relationships.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to people of more than one gender or regardless of gender. Historically definitions of bisexual refer to ‘an attraction towards men and women’ however many bisexual people recognise that there are more than two genders. Some people use the term ‘Pansexual’ to more explicitly recognise more than two genders.

Cisgender: Individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity. In other words, those who are not, or do not identify as transgender.

Gay: someone who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.

Gender Fluid: A person whose gender is not static and changes throughout their life. This could be on a daily / weekly / monthly basis and will be different for everyone.

Heterosexual (Straight): someone who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to people of the opposite gender.

Intersex: Someone whose biological sex is different in some way from what is traditionally considered clearly male or female. There are many ways to be intersex, it’s not just about external genitalia. It can also be because of differences in reproductive systems, chromosomes, or hormones. This may be apparent at birth or become apparent later in life - often at puberty, or when trying to have a child. Some people never find out that they’re intersex.

Lesbian: A girl or woman who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other girls or women.

Non-Binary: Gender identities that are not exclusively male or female. People can be both male and female, neither, or their gender may be more fluid (i.e. unfixed and changeable over the course of time). Many view gender as a one dimensional spectrum with male on one end, female on the other, and non-binary in the middle – but the reality is that gender is often more complex.

Pansexual: A person who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to anyone regardless of gender (see also “Bisexual”).

Queer: An umbrella term used for diverse sexual orientations or gender identities that are not heterosexual and do not fit within a gender binary. It may be used to challenge the idea of labels and categories such as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. It is important to note that it is an in-group term and may be considered offensive to some people.

Transgender: An umbrella term for those whose gender identity or expression differs in some way from the gender assigned to them at birth and conflicts with the ‘norms’ expected by the society they live in. Included in the overall transgender umbrella are transsexual people, non-binary gender identities and cross-dressing people.

Appendix 3

Extract From the Scottish Government Publication - Guidance For Schools On Supporting Transgender Young People

Supporting transgender young people at school: steps for good practice

1. Put the young person at the centre and keep them there:

- Allow them to talk about how they are feeling, and thank them for their courage in coming to see you
- If you don't know the answer to something, explain that, and offer to find out more information
- Let them know that you will not share their information with anyone unless they give their permission or there is a risk to themselves or others
- Find out the young person's views before sharing information with others, where possible, seek permission and/or inform them of what will be shared and why ⁷¹
- Ask them if they are getting support elsewhere
- Check whether or not the young person is being bullied or feels safe in school
- Ask the young person how they would like you and the school to support them
- Ask the young person if they plan to transition at school and if they would allow the school some time to prepare (if necessary)
- Set a date to meet again.

71 There are certain circumstances, for example sharing information with other agencies where you are required to seek the young person's consent prior to sharing their information.

2. Consider information sharing carefully:

- Do not disclose the transgender identity history or any sensitive information about a transgender young person to anyone inside or outside the school, without considering the young person's view and what is in the best interests of the young person
- Find out the young person's views before sharing information with others, where possible, seek permission and/or inform them of what will be shared and why
- You can, however, discuss situations in general terms with a colleague or a member of the leadership team, ensuring that you do not share personal information or 'out' the young person unintentionally
- If you have a child protection or wellbeing concern, let the young person know that you will need to follow procedures, and share information with the relevant staff or agency.

3. Get advice and support (if required):

- Speak to a colleague or a member of the senior management team for advice and guidance. They may have experience of supporting transgender young people or have a school strategy to guide practice
- Contact a specialist service which can provide additional support for the young person, for example groups and on-line support, or training for staff
- Contact your local authority education officer and/or equality officer or member of the senior management team. They may provide practical guidance and support, or information about the law and school responsibilities.

4. Arrange support meeting(s):

- With the young person's permission, arrange a meeting to plan how the school can reduce any barriers to learning and (if required) support their transition. This could include a plan with goals and clear timescales
- Arrange a meeting with parents/carers, and/or outside agencies as required; if the young person is happy for this to take place
- If they are under 16 and there is a clear wellbeing concern, follow your school procedures and arrange relevant meetings as required
- Let the young person know who will attend any meeting, what will be discussed or if possible, support them to attend.

5. Keep in touch with the young person:

- Make sure the young person knows how the school will support them and, if they are transitioning at school, that the young person is happy with the plans
- Check in regularly with the young person to offer support.