



4.2.7 Gender and Inclusion Policy

Background

The student environment at South Coast Baptist College exists within the legislative and regulatory framework that is established within Australia.

The Sex Discrimination Act (Commonwealth) 1984 broadly defines gender identity as “the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person’s designated sex at birth.”

Christian anthropology believes human identity is fully realised by bearing ‘God’s image’ and being redeemed by the grace of Christ. Regardless of our response to God, we are all endowed with the equal dignity of being equally respected as the image bearers of God.

At South Coast Baptist College, we offer Christ like support for a student and family who are faced with a child’s gender identity/orientation issues. We begin with ‘grace’ which means that we will be patient with the young person in their dilemma and offer to walk with them while they seek to make sense of the deep soul issues that are driving that dilemma. The support that is given to the student and family is based on God’s grace, justice and mercy:

- We listen well, long and with a supportive heart.
- We accept the reality of the pain of the issue.
- We understand the presenting problems.
- We discern the heart of the matter for the student, family and friends.
- We maintain enough trust in the relationship to help in the presenting issues involving the College.

South Coast Baptist College will do this in a way that:

- Sends the message that we want to keep the relationship open (Grace).
- Helps the student in their needs (Mercy).
- Does not endorse or enable destructive behaviour (Justice).

South Coast Baptist College will do all of this humbly and faithfully before God, with the help of His Holy Spirit (Micah 6:8 and Matthew 23:23)ⁱ

Purpose

The purpose of the Gender Inclusion Policy is to provide a framework that guides decision making and supports all members of the South Coast Baptist College community when a student experiences gender dysphoria.

In addition to prohibiting unlawful discrimination and bullying, including on the grounds of gender identity, the College aims to support and respect the student's preferred gender identity and calls on all members of the College community to provide the same level of respect and support. This support should fall under the category of 'hospitable pastoral care', not 'ideologies of sexual politics'ⁱⁱ

This Policy has been drafted on the assumption that a student and their parents/guardians are in agreement regarding the student's gender identity. However, the College acknowledges that circumstances may arise in which a student wishes to change their gender identity without the consent of their parents/guardians. Such a situation will need to be considered carefully and each situation will be dealt with individually based on the facts at the time.

Scope

This policy applies to all students and staff of South Coast Baptist College, relating to the roles and responsibilities of staff as they work with parents and students to create a positive and safe environment where students are empowered to be their best selves.

As in all aspects of providing students with a holistic education, the College views the matter of supporting students with gender identity issues as a partnership with the student and their parents/carers.

This policy will be enacted if a student has identified as having a gender identity different from the sex they were designated at birth and the student, seeks the support of South Coast Baptist College.

Process

In general, the following steps will be followed once a student has requested support:

1. Where a student has not discussed their gender dysphoria with their parents/carers, the staff with whom they have spoken will affirm the intrinsic value of the students and reassure them of the ongoing support and understanding of the College.
2. The management of the student's pastoral care will include the College Principal, all legal guardians of the student, a referring GP, appropriate mental health specialists and the student. Management of cases requires the consent and collaboration of all these parties.
3. Parents/carers will be asked to provide the College with a letter from a gender identity specialist or psychologist that outlines the issues and recommendations. This written communication is required so that the College can plan appropriately and develop an individual plan to support the student.
4. Relevant stakeholders, including the student, their parents, specialists and College staff, will meet to formulate strategies and develop an individual support plan for the student whilst they are at the College.
5. The support plan will be trialled for an appropriate amount of time determined at the time of implementation, reviewed and adjusted where necessary.
6. At all times, the College will aim to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the gender identity of its students so far as is reasonably practicable.

Individual Support Plan

In conjunction with the student and their parents/carers, the Principal, the Deputy Head of School (Wellbeing) and appropriate staff and the gender identity specialist/psychologist, will be involved in creating a support plan which is regularly reviewed and which aims to ensure that the College responds appropriately to the student's needs and addresses any potential issues.

It is important that the student understands they are a partner in the plan and actively follows the agreed decisions.

The process and considerations involved in developing individual support plans will be different depending on each student's preferences and needs. However, as a guide, the support plan may:

- outline the student's gender identity;
- identify current external supports that are in place;
- identify potential school-based wellbeing support;
- identify the student's or the parents'/carers' desired assistance from the College;
- consider the best timing to undertake any change of gender identity, such as after term break;
- outline agreed arrangements in relation to toilet facilities, uniform and sport;
- outline agreed accommodation arrangements where the student is on Outdoor Education activities, Year group camps or on an overseas tour;
- consider the wellbeing of other students in the event the student's gender identity change becomes known and causes distress. This may include a student support referral process;
- determine which other staff members need to be advised to support or teach the student;
- list the names of staff members who know of the gender identity change;
- identify the main points of contact for both the student and the College community;
- delegate responsibilities and roles under the plan;
- consider an appropriate communications strategy; and
- identify processes to:
 - a. review the plan
 - b. inform others should it be decided necessary
 - c. amend College documentation and records
 - d. address potential College community concerns
 - e. manage unforeseen circumstances

In the instance that the student is new to the College, the best way to protect the student's privacy and confidentiality is generally to keep to a minimum the number of staff who know the student's gender identity status. In some cases, this may be limited to the Principal. No one can assume that a staff member, extended family, or the student's social network is aware of the student's gender identity.

Where private information regarding a student's gender dysphoria becomes public, the College will consult with the student, their family and their support network to build a communication and action plan.

Privacy should be strictly observed, including the use of social media, and in varieties of meetings. Public activism and deliberate public disruptiveness to College operations or values, by parents, students or staff, needs to be regarded as operating outside of an appropriate pastoral care approach.

Name Changes

If a student's parents/carers have applied to change the student's name on their birth certificate and wish for the College to update their records accordingly, the College will require the student's parents/carers to provide a letter to the College requesting name and pronoun changes. Once received, the College will be able to update the College database, reporting procedures and arrange for new student ID cards to be made. The College will also require a copy of the student's new birth certificate reflecting their name change once it becomes available.

In the case that a student requests a name and/or pronoun change be made in relation to them without the knowledge or consent of their parents/carers, the College will offer support and understanding. This may include consultation with a counsellor or advocate alongside the student and the staff to which they have disclosed. Where appropriate, the student will be encouraged and supported in including their parents/carers in the discussion regarding the name and pronouns used when referring to the student in both verbal and written communication.

Facilities

The College will consider the appropriate use of facilities such as toilets, showers and change rooms, in consultation with the student, their parents/carers and their gender identity specialist/psychologist. In general, this will see students either use the facilities of their identified gender or the universal access facilities, as negotiated between students, their families and the College

Whilst the College will endeavour to accommodate the student's preferences with respect to facilities use, this may not always be possible. As the College campus develops, provisions for appropriate facilities that allow for privacy and inclusion will be made.

Uniforms

In circumstances where a student is experiencing a gender dysphoria, the College will endeavour to accommodate the student's preferences with respect to uniforms (ie both school and sports uniforms).

Residential Considerations

Accommodation on Year Group Camps, International Tours or Outdoor Education activities has the potential to be highly complex and contentious. The College has the obligation to ensure the safety of all students including any students undergoing gender dysphoria. The College cannot knowingly put students in a position of risk. As such, arrangements for students experiencing gender dysphoria who participate in Year Group Camps, International Tours or Outdoor Education activities would form part of the Student Support Plan and as such be in agreement with the parents of the gender dysphoric student.

Community Adjustment

Where the student changing gender identity is a current student, community members who already know the student may need:

- support
- further information on gender identity
- to discuss issues in general with a senior staff member

The College will endeavour to ensure that an appropriate contact person is designated to handle any community concerns.

Adjustments to a student's change in gender identity will typically:

- occur as a matter of practice over time
- include use of:
 - the student's new name
 - pronouns appropriate to the student's preferred gender identity (i.e. he or she; his and her).

Helpful Links and Resources

https://au.educationhq.com/news/53283/the-shift-towards-unisex-school-bathrooms/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EducationWeek%20Australia%20October%202024&utm_content=EducationWeek%20Australia%20October%202024+CID_7c390d331489b1877b626abca5e8f1e2&utm_source=EducationHQ%20Campaigns&utm_term=The%20shift%20to%20wards%20unisex%20school%20bathrooms

Sex Discrimination Act (Cth) 1984

Guidelines for supporting sexual and gender diversity in schools, Equal Opportunities Commission of Western Australia, 2013

Greenwood K and Hastie D (2019) *Thriving in Community 2.0* Christian Schools Australia pages 34 – 43

Brill, S and Pepper, R, *The Transgender Child – A Handbook for Families and Professionals*. Cleis Press, San Francisco.

ⁱ Greenwood Ken and Hastie Dr David (2019) *Thriving in Community 2.0* Christian Schools Australia page 39

ⁱⁱ Greenwood Ken and Hastie Dr David (2019) *Thriving in Community 2.0* Christian Schools Australia page 40

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