



# Sacred Heart High School

"For the sake of one child, I would have founded the Society"

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22 September 2017

Dear Parents and Carers

## TRANSGENDER AWARENESS

I write to outline our school's response to the sensitivities around transgender amongst our student body that all schools are facing nationally.

The Equality Act 2010 clearly states the legal position which has been further outlined in the DfE guidance for schools *The Equality Act and Schools, May 2014*. It states:

### **Gender reassignment**

*3.3 Protection from discrimination because of gender reassignment in schools is new for pupils in the Equality Act, although school staff are already protected. This means that for the first time it will be unlawful for schools to treat pupils less favourably because of their gender reassignment and that schools will have to factor in gender reassignment when considering their obligations under the Equality Duty.*

*3.4 Gender reassignment is defined in the Equality Act as applying to anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process (or part of a process) of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes. This definition means that in order to be protected under the Act, a pupil will not necessarily have to be undertaking a medical procedure to change their sex but must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender, or proposing to do so.*

In addition, the public sector equality duty (also part of the Equality Act) requires the school to take steps to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between pupils who share a protected characteristic (such as commencing gender reassignment) and pupils who do not share it.

As a school we must operate within the law, and as a Catholic school we must look to ensure we respond to difficult situations for young people, with compassion, dignity and respect. In this, we seek the guidance of Jesus.

The Gospels paint a picture of Jesus reaching out to people, focusing particularly on those who are stigmatized or on the fringes of society for a variety of reasons. In words and action, Jesus transforms the lives of people who experience doubt, isolation, rejection and illness by restoring them to wholeness and bringing them back into the fullness of community life.

The Gospels therefore calls us to love and be of service to the vulnerable and often marginalised individuals who are striving to be true to who they believe they are and are called to be.



Pope Francis' words, offered in a different context, capture this well. As he said in a homily in Havana Sept. 20, 2015:

*'The call to serve involves something special, to which we must be attentive. Serving means caring for their vulnerability. Caring for the vulnerable of our families, our society, our people. Theirs are the suffering, fragile and downcast faces which Jesus tells us specifically to look at and which he asks us to love. With a love which takes shape in our actions and decisions. With a love which finds expression in whatever tasks we, as citizens, are called to perform. It is people of flesh and blood, people with individual lives and stories, and with all their frailty, that Jesus asks us to protect, to care for and to serve. Being a Christian entails promoting the dignity of our brothers and sisters, fighting for it, living for it.'*

In recognising Jesus as our teacher through the Gospels, the first impulse for us as a Catholic school must be to promote greater wholeness for transgender individuals by listening, caring, supporting and offering community. This means at a minimum, offering very basic gestures of welcoming respect, such as using the young person's preferred pronoun and addressing them with their preferred name, recognizing their intent to live as the person they believe God created them to be, and refraining from any judgement.

This week our assembly theme was 'Just be yourself, be proud of who you are'. At KS4 the following prayer was used:

*Teach us God, to treasure the differences that distinguish one person from another. Fill us with the strength to overcome senseless fear and hatred. Open our hearts to the radiance that shines forth from every human soul. Inspire us to shed our apathy, remind us that it is our obligation to be responsible for one another. Open our ears to the cry of all those who are in need of our assistance. Give us the courage to combat prejudice and intolerance wherever they exist. Teach us to see each other through your eyes, God. In your eyes all people are equally loved, equally precious. Bless us all, God, with compassion, with kindness, and with peace.*

Share this letter with your daughter if you wish and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards



Marian Doyle  
Headteacher