



GENDER EQUITY POLICY 2018

RATIONALE

Catholic schools are committed to creating inclusive, engaging and mutually respectful environments where all members of the school community flourish' (CEOM 2010)

The Academy of Mary Immaculate places particular emphasis on being inclusive to all members of the community no matter their background or identity. We seek to be a community which embodies key Mercy values of compassion, respect, service, hospitality, courage, and justice, both in word and action.

As stated in the CEM Horizons of Hope Vision Statement (2016), all members of a Catholic school community are learners who:

- Honour the sacred dignity of each person
- Search for truth
- Embrace difference and diversity
- Build a culture of learning together
- Engage with the deep questions of life
- Honour equitable access and opportunity for all
- Commit to achieving the highest standards possible
- Make a difference in the world

It is upon this premise that this policy is designed to ensure that members of the Academy community – female, male, transgender – are treated equitable and justly and, as such, have access to opportunities to grow to their fullest potential.

In responding to the unique learning and support needs of gender dysphoric children and young people in Catholic school settings, all decision making between the principal, parent/carers, child, gender dysphoria medical experts, treating specialist/s and relevant governing authorities should be guided by the principles of:

- a. inclusion, respect and dignity for the human person*
- b. collaboration and open, constructive and non-judgmental dialogue*
- c. active listening and cooperation*
- d. discernment, objectivity and fairness.*

(CEM Policy 2.31 Pastoral Care for students experiencing gender dysphoria)

DEFINITIONS

Sex: A biological term dividing a species into male and female, usually based on physical, hormonal, chromosomal and genetic characteristics.

Intersex: the status of having physical, hormonal genetic or chromosomal features that are:

- a. neither wholly female nor wholly male; (or)
- b. a combination of female and male; (or)
- c. neither female nor male' (*Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)).

Being intersex is about biological variations, not about a person's gender identity. People with intersex variations share the same range of sexual orientation and gender identities as people with no intersex variations.

Gender: a person's identity as male or female, harmonious with one's biological sex upon birth

Gender identity: one's own concept of self as male or female. The way in which individuals perceive and describe themselves. It is defined in the legislation 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' (*Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Commonwealth)).

Gender dysphoria: a marked incongruence between the natal (birth) gender and the experienced/expressed gender of the person (APA 2013).

Transgender: a person whose gender identity is different to their biological sex.

Gender transitioning: the process where a transgender person commences living as a member of another sex. This may occur through medical intervention, style of dressing, or anything else that indicates an intention to commence living permanently as a member of another sex.

POLICY STATEMENT/GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Within the context of this policy the principles which underpin it relate to promoting and enhancing student wellbeing of a personal, social, physical, emotional, mental or spiritual nature. Key elements of student wellbeing are positive self-regard, respect for others, positive relationships, responsible behaviours and personal resilience. The Academy is committed to:

- providing an environment which is welcoming and safe
- recognising diversity in all its forms
- respecting the dignity of every individual
- promoting social, emotional, physical and psychological wellbeing of all its members
- connecting the Gospel with the students, staff and parents' lived reality

PROCEDURES

It is incumbent upon the College to exercise caution, prudence and sensitivity in establishing how best to respond to the unique pastoral and learning needs of gender dysphoric children and young people. It is the role of families, supported by the school, to accompany students on their growth into maturity and help them understand the changes that are taking place.

As a College we are required to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate bullying, harassment and discrimination. In actively promoting an inclusive school environment, the College will work with the child and their parents/carers, gender dysphoria medical experts, other treating specialist/s and relevant governing authorities to develop a school management plan to support the pastoral and learning needs of the student.

The College will enact a management plan which will distinguish between the physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual development of the students and include the provision of specialist counselling.

We will identify and establish clear expectations, strategies and actions. In doing so we seek to enable students to feel safe, valued and connected to their school community so that they may effectively engage with their learning.

Provisions within the management plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure that they continue to meet and reflect the wellbeing and educational needs of the gender dysphoric student, their family and the school community.

In developing and enacting a school management plan for a student diagnosed with gender dysphoria, the Principal will:

- a. Within the concept of 'community of care', engage in ongoing dialogue with the child and their parents/carers, gender dysphoria experts, other specialist/s and relevant governing authorities to identify strategies to assist the school to provide agreed pastoral and learning supports in accordance with their age, capability and maturity. This may include consulting on:
 - o the referencing of and recording of student's preferred name, gender identity, and preferred use of pronouns
 - o the use of toilets, showers and change rooms that meet the needs of the student
 - o the appropriate uniform that reflects the gender identity of the student and meets the school's dress or uniform code.
- b. Request relevant medical reports and supporting documentation from gender dysphoria medical experts and other treating specialist/s. Gender dysphoria experts for children and young people up to age 17 are available through Royal Children's Hospital, Parkville. Adolescents over the age of 17 can be referred to the Monash Gender Dysphoria Clinic, Hampton.
- c. Maintain privacy and confidentiality in accordance with relevant legislation. The sharing of information should only be communicated with those who have an appropriate reason to know in order to support the wellbeing and learning outcomes of the student.
- d. Ensure the student is not subject to bullying, harassment and/or discrimination either directly or indirectly.
- e. Include the provision of relevant professional learning and information for staff, students and families within the school community to raise understanding of gender dysphoria within the context of Catholic teachings about human sexuality.
- f. Consider the pastoral and academic needs of all members of the school community with the individual needs of the child experiencing gender dysphoria and their family.
- g. Update school policies, where appropriate, to reflect arrangements for gender dysphoric students.

Principals should contact the Manager, Student Wellbeing Unit for additional advice and support.

The student may be a 'mature minor'

The Academy of Mary Immaculate recognises that parents and carers are significant and essential partners in actively supporting and nurturing the educational and wellbeing outcomes of children and young people from early years through to adolescence. For this reason, the College will continue

to engage parents in schooling matters even after the student has turned 18 and are legally recognised as adults.

Notwithstanding this, for a variety of reasons students under the age of 18 sometimes ask to make decisions on their own behalf as a 'mature minor', without involvement of their parents. In such scenarios the Principal should, in the first instance, seek advice from Catholic Education Melbourne's Legal Unit prior to determining whether a student is a 'mature minor'.

Related Documents

Academy Child Safety Policy, 2017
CEM 2.30 Sexual Orientation Policy
CEM Horizons of Hope Vision Statement, 2016
CEM 2.31 Pastoral Care for Students Experiencing Gender Dysphoria

Date to be reviewed

Indicates the time the policy will be reviewed (month, year)