

Supporting Trans Children in Schools



Findings and Recommendations from a 2020 Frontiers of Sociology article on LGBT inclusive education (open access).

Thriving or Surviving? Raising our ambition for trans children in primary and secondary schools

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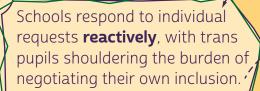
Trans pupils face stigma and invalidation at school, often alongside discrimination and harassment

Affirmative language, respect and transpositivity are critical

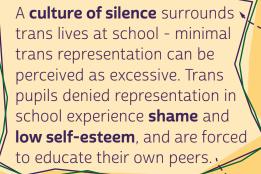
Trans pupils experience persistent **stress**, navigating systems that delegitimise and exclude them. An antibullying approach underestimates the emotional and psychological impact on trans pupils of **cisnormativity***.



Schools need to address the cisnormative practices that negatively impact on the wellbeing and mental health of trans pupils.











Cisnormativity*: When systems, policies and people assume that everyone is (or should be) cis (not trans). Cisnormative schools place trans pupils at a disadvantage, requiring them to navigate systems designed to exclude them. ignorance and hostility
from school staff, causing
significant harm. Even one
supportive and trusted
teacher can make a profound
positive impact on a trans
pupil's experience of school.

Teacher trans-positivity
is significantly correlated
with pupil wellbeing.

Schools need to recognize and address the **pressures** and barriers to teacher action. Clear **leadership** is essential, and can be driven by governors, head teachers and individual members of staff.

schools lack
ambition for trans
pupils, aiming for the
low bar of protection
from harassment
and abuse. Trans
pupils need equality
of opportunity, in
schools where they
can excel and thrive.

Trans pupils should be affirmed and welcomed, in schools where they are represented, validated and respected as equals

Teacher **education and training** needs to move beyond basic education on transphobic bullying, to helping staff understand the ways in which cisnormativity privileges cisgender individuals and makes life harder for trans pupils. 2

Trans pupils need at least one adult who can advocate for them, help them understand their rights, and help them navigate cisnormative cultures. Teacher allies need to understand and challenge the systems and approaches that delegitimise and marginalise trans pupils.



Trans children have a right to an educational experience that is safe, inclusive and affirming.

Schools should **listen to** trans pupils and centre child rights. Schools also need to consider their **institutional responsibilities**, ensuring schools are fulfilling their **duty of care** to trans pupils.



Trans: The term trans is used here to include people who are transgender, non-binary and/or gender diverse.

