

Scope

This policy applies to MACS and its subsidiaries.

Principles

The way a school responds to gender dysphoric students must be informed and guided by the mission of Jesus, who came 'that they may have life, and have it to the full'. Therefore the school has a serious duty of care for each of its students, which it interprets in light of Jesus' own ministry. In all circumstances the school will endeavour to ensure that all parties act truthfully, charitably, with good will, and with absolute respect for the human dignity of all parties (Parkinson, 2017, p. 23).

In responding to the unique learning and support needs of gender incongruent children and young people in Catholic school settings, all decision making between the principal, parent/carers, child, gender 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.

For further support and context please refer to Created and Loved Section B: Pastoral Principles (ACBC 2022).

Policy

Catholic schools must exercise caution, prudence and sensitivity in establishing how best to respond to the unique pastoral and learning needs of gender incongruent 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.

Procedural considerations

Those providing pastoral care in Catholic schools will not automatically simply affirm the student's self-perceived condition; rather, building on an authentic

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 should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they continue to meet and reflect the wellbeing and educational needs of the gender incongruent student, their family and the school community.

In developing and enacting a school management plan for a student presenting with gender incongruence, the principal should:

- a. Within the concept of 'community of care', engage in ongoing dialogue with the child and their parents/carers, gender medical 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:
 - x the biological sex of all students at time of enrolment should be documented and kept on school records
 - x the referencing of student's preferred name, preferred use of pronouns, and preferred gender may be noted on school records
 - x the use of toilets, showers and change rooms that meet the needs of the student
 - x the appropriate uniform that reflects the gender expression of the student and meets the school's dress or uniform code.
- b. Request relevant medical reports and supporting documentation from gender medical experts and other treating specialist/s. (for gender dysphoria or gender incongruence)
- 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 incongruence 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 incongruence and their family.
- g. Update school policies, where appropriate, to reflect arrangements for gender incongruent students.

Definitions

Bullying

MACS school or school

A school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by MACS, directly or through MACSS (as the context requires). References to schools or MACS schools also includes boarding schools.

References

American Psychiatric Association (APA). 2013, Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM) (5th ed.), American Psychiatric Association Publishing, Arlington, VA.

American Psychiatric Association (APA). 2020, What is Gender Dysphoria? Patient and Families