

Essa Foundations Academy Trust

LGBTQ+ Policy

Principles and Values

Essa Foundation Academies Trust (EFAT) is a happy learning environment where staff and students feel safe and secure. This is built on positive relationships and mutual respect.

Every member of staff has a key role in the safety and progress of students in order to allow them to sustain and achieve their very best in an environment free from bullying. All staff have a duty of care and responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the well-being of students. Diversity is welcomed and respected within the Academies Trust.

What is LGBTQ+?

LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer and along with heterosexual these words describe people's sexual orientation or gender identity. These terms are explained in more detail here.

- **Lesbian:** A lesbian woman is one who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.
- **Bisexual:** A bisexual person is someone who is romantically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of all sexes and genders.
- **Transgender or Trans:** Is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity (internal feeling of being male, female or transgender) and/or gender expression, differs from that usually associated with their birth sex.
- **Gender Identity:** One's gender identity refers to whether one feels male, female or transgender (regardless of one's biological sex). Gender expression refers to outwardly expressing one's gender identity.
- **Queer or Questioning:** Queer is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities that are not heterosexual or cisgender. The questioning of one's gender, sexual identity, sexual orientation, or all three is a process of exploration by people who may be unsure, still exploring, and concerned about applying a social label to themselves for various reasons.

Other terms that are also used:

- **Intersex:** A variation in sex characteristics including chromosomes, gonads, or genitals that do not allow an individual to be distinctly identified as male or female.
- **Asexuality (or non-sexuality)** is the lack of sexual attraction to anyone, or low or absent interest in sexual activity. It may be considered the lack of a sexual orientation, or one of the variations thereof, alongside heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality.
- **Pansexual:** Someone who is attracted to a person regardless of their gender or sex.

Disclosure

If a student makes a disclosure about their questioning of sexual orientation, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Head of Year (HoY) are notified. Students can confidently disclose any information to staff and it will be handled in a professional manner. If a student discloses details, as a school we are not required to inform parents/ carers if the child does not permit us. Parents/ carers will only be informed where there is a safeguarding concern for the student.

Whole School Approach

EFATs approach to a student's identify as LGBTQ is holistic and integrated, where the support of the student is the key consideration in every response. A key strategy in supporting students and preventing transphobic bullying in school is to promote a climate of acceptance and respect for all. LGBTQ+ is embedded into the PSHE curriculum and form time activities throughout the year (written LSG, PSHEE Coordinator), the purpose of sessions/ lessons is to allow students to be in a safe environment based on tolerance and mutual respect. LGBTQ+ is covered in RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) and in the PSHEE curriculum.

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they etc.) specifically refer to people that you are talking about. If a transgender student would like to be referred to as their preferred gender, EFAT has the responsibility to refer to the student using the students preferred pronouns, he/him/she/her. For a non-binary student, the pronouns used should be 'they/it'.

Bullying/ homophobic behaviour

EFAT take bullying very seriously. Students and parents should be assured that they will be fully supported when bullying is reported.

Bullying will not be tolerated. EFAT will seek ways to counter the effects of bullying that may occur within our schools or in the local community. The ethos of EFAT fosters high expectations of outstanding behaviour and we will challenge any behaviour that falls below this.

- All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents should understand what bullying is.
- All governors and teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.

LGBTQ bullying can consist of:

Homophobia: Refers to fear of or prejudice and discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people. It is also the dislike of same-sex attraction and love or the hatred of people who have those feelings.

Transphobia: Refers to fear of or prejudice and discrimination against people who are transgender or who are perceived to transgress norms of gender, gender identity or gender expression.

Consequences to homophobic bullying

This will be in line with the EFAT behaviour policy. Every circumstance will be treated individually.

Support to students

EFAT have a school counsellor based on site for referrals such as students who have identified as LGBTQ+. Heads of Year are supportive and inclusive and will ensure students are in a safe learning environment with support within school. Youth Workers from the council are also available to discuss and support students in everyday life at the academy, ensuring support with emotional and mental wellbeing and a safe environment to discuss general wellbeing.

Everyday life at EFAT

All students should feel safe and supported when accessing toilet and changing facilities. Transgender students should be able to access toilet and changing facilities that correspond with their gender identity. If a student transitions during the course of their time in school a member of the student support team or equivalent should consult with the student as to how he or she wishes to access these facilities.

Students are able to access gender neutral toilets which are on every floor and are also used as accessible toilets. These are for any students who feel they do not want to use gender specific toilets.

Each school must maintain a register of students attending the school (Education Welfare Act). The Board of Management of each school is ultimately responsible for decisions regarding a name change of a student and consequently there is nothing to preclude a school from using a student's preferred name in day to day interactions, regardless of the name used officially on the school register. All decisions should be done with the welfare of the student as the primary consideration and, where possible, in consultation with the parents/guardians of the student.

It is possible for a young person under the age of 18 years to change their name by deed poll with the consent of their parents/ carers. A change of name by deed poll provides official documentary evidence that a person has changed their name legally and the deed poll, along with a birth certificate, is a legal document and acceptable for most administrative purposes.

Students in Physical Education

Physical Education (PE) is an important area of the second-level curriculum. It is intrinsically linked with maintaining physical and mental health and overall well-being. All students, including transgender students have the same right to physical education and sport as other young people and are encouraged to participate in sport and physical education. Students receive two one-hour lessons of PE across a two-week timetable. Students are taught in either single gender or mixed gender groups depending on the need of the student.

Students are able to access gender neutral changing rooms which are on every floor and are also used as disabled toilets. This is for any student who feels they do not want to use gender specific changing rooms.

School Uniform

All students, including transgender students, should be expected to follow the school uniform policy and to comply with set policies on use of make-up, appropriate dress, jewellery. Students who are transgender or intersex are permitted to wear a uniform that is consistent with their gender identity.

Where a school has a gender specific sports uniform, a transgender student is able to wear the uniform of their preferred gender.