



Student Care: Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity (SOGI)
Approved by the JKCS Board - October 2025

John Knox Christian School is committed to partnering with parents in creating a safe, respectful learning environment rooted in the love of Christ. We believe in the importance of discipleship and in guiding students in truth and love found in perfect harmony in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We are committed to walking alongside students and their families as we seek God's wisdom and discernment for each individual situation.

The goal of this document is to provide clarity and guidance necessary for staff to respond to and care for students who ask questions about their own or others' gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Purpose & Scope

1. This policy ensures that curriculum and instruction for students align with the JKCS core convictions regarding marriage, gender, and sexuality, providing clarity for staff, students, parents, and prospective parents, as clarified in Bylaw 1 and detailed in *The Community Pledge*.
2. This policy clarifies the role of staff and provides guidance to help teachers and other staff members respond to and care for students who are asking questions about their gender identity and/or sexuality.

Clarifying the Role of Staff as it pertains to matters of sexual orientation and gender identity

JKCS staff and staff leadership have a moral, ethical, and legal responsibility to care for students. Each student, made in the image of God, is a valued person within the JKCS community. As a Christian school, we operate under the delegated authority of parents, who bear the primary responsibility for the spiritual and moral formation of their children.

Teachers responsible for delivering curriculum that addresses topics related to marriage, human sexuality, or gender are expected to continue teaching in accordance with the school's stated beliefs, as defined in *The Community Pledge*. These statements reflect the theological foundation of our school and ensure consistency in how such topics are approached in the classroom.

As a Christian school, we recognize that parents are the primary educators of their children. It is within the context of a trusting and loving parent-child relationship that these sensitive topics are best addressed. The role of staff is to support, not replace, the responsibility and authority of parents.

- Unless the curriculum specifically requires these topics to be addressed, staff ought not initiate discussions on them.
- In situations where students raise questions beyond the scope of classroom instruction, teachers will, with sensitivity, encourage students to speak with their parents or religious leaders for further guidance.
- If a student or community member requests clarification on these issues, staff are not required to explain the school's position. In most cases, staff are encouraged to refer questions to the leadership team.
- Staff should refrain from engaging in extended discussions about marriage, sexuality, or gender with students outside of the scope of the curriculum. (See Page 4)
- Staff may not engage in "Conversion Therapy," which is banned under federal law.
 - Conversion Therapy is defined by Bill C-4 in the Criminal Code of Canada:
 - **"a practice, treatment or service designed to:**
 - change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual,
 - change a person's gender identity to cisgender,
 - change a person's gender expression so that it conforms to the sex assigned to the person at birth,
 - repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour,
 - repress a person's non-cisgender gender identity, or
 - repress or reduce a person's gender expression that does not conform to the sex assigned at birth."
 - While JKCS holds to a view of sexual morality and identity as outlined in Bylaw 1, we do not practice, permit, or condone conversion therapy. Staff must refer students to their parents or trusted spiritual leaders in a kind and respectful manner for guidance on these matters. This approach protects both staff and students while upholding the values and responsibilities of our school community.
- Staff should seek ongoing training on how to care for students in legally and theologically responsible ways, especially in areas of mental health and student support.

Posture matters - a posture of love, empathy and respect builds bridges. Trust the Holy Spirit as you plant seeds of truth in love, allowing God to produce growth. Pray without ceasing, asking God for wisdom along the way.

Clarifying the Role of Leaders as it pertains to matters of sexual orientation and gender identity

In addition to the role of staff outlined above, the school leadership team is tasked with great responsibility. The administrative leadership:

- Advises the board on situations (or potential situations) that may impact school culture, the school community, the school's reputation, as well as liability or risk issues, while maintaining the confidentiality of particular student disclosures.
- Ensures staff and student care, including accommodation requests.
- Regularly provides training for staff.

Curriculum & Classroom Conversations

Unless the curriculum specifically requires these topics to be addressed, staff ought not initiate discussions on them.

JKCS follows the Ontario Curriculum in all subject areas with the exception of Health Education. Health Education Ontario Curriculum does not fully align with the JKCS position on Gender Orientation, Sexuality, and Sexual Orientation. Thoughtful educators and JKCS leadership have developed a JKCS Health Education Scope and Sequence to discuss gender and sexuality in age-appropriate ways, aligning with Bylaw 1 and *The Community Pledge*. The curriculum is teacher-created and compiled from various Christian curriculum sources (e.g., Protect Young Eyes).

In subjects such as Social Studies, the topic of families is explored. Age-appropriate conversations about the different ways a family could look will be conducted with clarity around God's design for marriage and family. At age-appropriate times, teachers can help students see that families can look very different (e.g., adoption, divorce, extended family at home) and teach them how to be kind and loving when a family doesn't resemble their own. In Biblical Studies, conversations sometimes include elements of sexual orientation and gender identity. At all times, teachers will instruct in accordance with the JKCS *Community Pledge*.

In situations where students raise questions beyond the scope of classroom instruction, teachers will, with sensitivity, encourage students to speak with their parents or religious leaders for further guidance. Our filter is always grace, truth, and love. If conversations, questions, or issues arise in the classroom because an individual in that room is openly questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation, teachers should refer questions and concerns to parents and religious leaders. Teachers can also find ways to coach students to love and show kindness towards all people, even and especially when they disagree with their opinions and/or choices. If a teacher needs support in these conversations, they are encouraged to involve leadership.

Teachers are free to teach, model, and encourage students to grow in Christ-like character and deepen their understanding of who they are in God's eyes. However, any conversations outside the classroom setting about gender identity or human sexuality should be referred to their parents or religious officials.

Student Disclosure

The following is intended to serve as a guide to help school staff respond in a compassionate, wise, and gospel-centred way when a student shares that they are wrestling with their identity or gender. The principles here emphasize respect, empathy, gospel truth, and a posture that reflects Christ's love. Staff are *not* expected to accompany the student through every stage of the journey. Instead, staff are encouraged to play a role that fosters parental involvement and support, where appropriate.

If a student is wrestling with questions around sexuality or any other personal challenge, we desire to walk alongside them and their parents with both compassion and biblical truth. Our bylaws were not created as a tool for removing families from JKCS. Families will not be removed from John Knox based on sexual orientation or gender identity. We remain committed to supporting families as we navigate these conversations together within the context of our shared faith.

Canada's criminal laws prohibit any practice that seeks to change or repress a student's sexual orientation or gender identity. Staff may offer support rooted in Scripture, provided it is marked by compassion, respect, and a non-coercive and non-directive approach. Our goal is to help children discuss their identity with their parents or guardians.

Navigating the conversation:

- **Listen Actively and Respectfully:** Offer a compassionate ear when a student shares personal struggles, without interrupting, correcting, or steering the conversation.
- **Affirm the Student's Dignity:** Remind the student that they are loved by God, made in His image, and inherently valuable, regardless of what he/she is going through.
- **Pray with or for the Student (with Consent):** Offer to pray with the student if they express interest, or let them know they are being prayed for as a gesture of spiritual care, not correction.
- **Encourage Community Belonging:** Foster participation in school life and ensure students know they are valued members of the classroom and community.
- **Point to the Gospel and Scripture Thoughtfully:** Offer biblical encouragement focused on God's love, grace, and faithfulness, *without applying it in a way that implies a need to change the student's identity.*
- **Use Clear Boundaries in Conversations:** Avoid conversations that attempt to define or resolve the student's internal struggles; instead, offer to compassionately listen as he/she explore those questions.
- **Model Christ-like Character:** Demonstrate love, patience, humility, and gentleness in all interactions, reflecting Christ's posture toward those who are vulnerable or seeking.
- **Offer Support:** Name that you are not an expert and would like to consult with the school's principal to find out how best to support them *with his or her permission.* If permission to disclose is not granted, staff should consult with a member of the leadership team without using the student's name and take care to ensure the name is not inadvertently disclosed.
- **Confidentiality:** The staff member should discuss the matter with a member of the leadership team (see above bullet) but should refrain from sharing it with anyone else. The child's consent is key.
- **Connect with Parents:** As always, staff will facilitate conversations with students with the goal of having the student speak with their parents or guardians. Leadership and the staff member can work together with the child to help facilitate this conversation.

Caring for a Child with Questions about their Identity

When a student discloses that they experience same-gender attraction or questions about gender identity, research shows this can be a particularly vulnerable time for their mental health.

- **Elevated Risk:** Youth in this situation face significantly higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts compared to their peers. The weeks and months following disclosure are often the period of highest risk.
- **Rejection as a Factor:** Studies consistently find that negative or rejecting responses from family, peers, or authority figures significantly increase the likelihood of self-harm or suicide attempts.
- **Protective Factors:** A caring, consistent, and respectful response from adults in the student's life reduces these risks. Having even one trusted adult who listens and provides support is linked with much better mental health outcomes.

Hold what the child shared in confidence as you seek to promote parent involvement. Our goal is to facilitate a mediated conversation between the parent or guardian and the child as soon as possible. In cases when a student's mental health or well-being could be at risk, the child's consent to involve parents is not necessary. With or without child consent for disclosure, staff should watch for signs of distress or isolation and follow up with encouragement, invitations to healthy activities, and referrals to pastoral or professional care. Compliance with the school's Child Welfare Policy and provincial mandatory reporting requirements applies in all circumstances.

Accommodations Requests

Implications of gender identity are complex, delicate, and highly personal. Students with gender dysphoria, or whose gender expression is non-conforming, are often in a vulnerable psychological and spiritual condition. Any educator approached with a request for accommodation should respond with sensitivity, respect, and compassion. The principal should be informed. Steps should be taken, where appropriate, to ensure that counselling and support are made available to the student and their family.

Where a request is received based on gender dysphoria or gender expression, leadership should respond in a prompt and supportive manner. All accommodations must be prayerfully considered through the JKCS leadership and agreed upon by the child's parent/guardian, and in accordance with this policy. The privacy rights of students are paramount. Any information that must be disclosed for the purposes of accommodations must only be disclosed to the leadership team and certain staff on a need-to-know basis.

All requests for specific accommodations will receive an email response within 24 hours acknowledging receipt of the email and an answer with next steps within two weeks of the initial request being received. Parents may request accommodations for their child using the attached form (see appendix).

1. The student requests a name change or pronoun change.

The school will use legal names on all official documents, including learning reports and the Ontario Student Record. In day-to-day interactions, accommodations can be made for students to use a parent-approved, student-preferred nickname.

JKCS affirms that God created humanity male and female and that biological gender is a good gift from God. For this reason, staff and official school communication will use a student's biologically determined pronouns as stated on their birth certificates. Students will be listened to with care, and leadership will work with parents/guardians to ensure the family is at the centre of any ongoing support.

2. The student wishes to use a washroom or changeroom that is not intended for their biological gender.

JKCS provides washrooms and change rooms that are designated based on biological gender. Students are expected to use the facilities that correspond to their biological gender. An accommodation can be granted for a single-stall washroom for the student.

3. A student arrives at a school on a free-dress or spirit day in non-conforming gender clothing.

JKCS's expectations for student appearance apply equally on free-dress days: clothing should be modest, respectful, and consistent with a student's biological gender. If a student arrives in clothing that intentionally presents as the opposite gender, staff will respond with calm and compassion. We seek to understand intent, as a costume on Spirit Day may be quite innocent (e.g., a kindergarten girl dressed as her favourite Blue Jays player). In all cases, regardless of intent, staff should avoid public correction or discipline. The staff member should discreetly inform leadership, who may contact the parents/guardians to discuss next steps. Students will not be shamed or excluded from participation; however, leadership will work with the family to ensure that future clothing choices reflect JKCS's community standards and biblical convictions.

4. Overnight Trips

Upon receipt of a written request from a parent/guardian, staff will make reasonable efforts to provide an accommodation that best addresses any privacy concerns for all students involved.

APPENDIX A - SOGI Accommodation Request for Student

Where a request is received based on gender dysphoria or gender expression, JKCS leadership will prayerfully consider possible accommodations in conversation with the child's parent/guardian. Any information disclosed on this form for the purposes of accommodations will only be disclosed to the leadership team and certain staff on a need-to-know basis. All requests for specific accommodations will receive an email response within 24 hours acknowledging receipt of the email and an answer with next steps within two weeks of the initial request being received.

Please email your form to the school principal.

Student Name:	Date of Request:
Parent/Guardian requesting:	
If the child has more than one parent, does the other parent agree with this request for accommodation? YES or NO If no, please explain:	If the child is being cared for by a guardian, do the parent(s) know and agree with this accommodation request? YES or NO If no, please explain:
Specific Accommodation Request:	
Reason for request:	
Student signature:	
Parent/Guardian Signature:	
Parent/Guardian email:	