

Nigel & Sally Rowe
C/O Christian Concern
70 Wimpole Street
London W1G 8AX

The Most Reverend
Archbishop Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury
Lambeth Palace
London SE1 7JU

October 7, 2022

Dear Archbishop Justin,

You will remember that five years ago we raised an issue with you about six-year-old pupils being allowed to identify in the opposite sex at our sons' Church of England primary school. As we said at the time, we don't believe schools should be allowing young children to identify in the opposite sex. In UK law you cannot change legal gender until you are 18 years old. Scientifically, you cannot change your biological sex. Furthermore, basic Christian teaching is that we are all created male or female and that the differences between the sexes are beautiful, designed and complementary, and should be respected in society. We are all created male and female (Genesis 1:27).

Our sons were distressed and upset by being told that they must refer to their friends according to their adopted gender. We were also concerned for the harmful effects on the children who were allowed to socially transition, as well as the effects on all the other children in the school.

As you will remember, the school rejected our complaint and said in a letter that our son would be deemed to be demonstrating "transphobic behaviour" if he refused to refer to pupils by their adopted name or pronouns.

We were very disturbed by this and therefore raised the issue with Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Education, our local Church of England diocese. To our great surprise and disappointment, the diocese supported the school's position, referring to the "Valuing All God's Children" guidance for Church of England Schools. This notorious guidance actually says that children as young as five years old should be affirmed by Church of England schools if they wish to identify as the opposite sex.

With great sadness we decided that we were not prepared to allow our children to continue to be disturbed and pressured into affirming the opposite gender to the God-given gender of fellow pupils. In order to protect our children, we chose to withdraw them from the school, and we have been home-schooling them since then. We are pleased to report that the confusion and distress has now lifted, and they are now thriving and much happier boys. We are confident that in this we made the right decision.

We continued to be concerned for the effects of the school's policy on the other pupils at the school. We were also concerned about how this policy would affect other schools across the country.

Consequently, we wrote to the Department for Education (DfE) calling on the Secretary of State to intervene and provide clear guidance for schools in how to handle pupils who wish to identify as the opposite sex. We also presented [extensive expert evidence](#) to the DfE showing how trans affirming policies can have 'catastrophic outcomes' for gender confused children. When the DfE refused to properly assess this evidence, we pursued a judicial review of this decision which was given permission to be heard by Lord Justice Lane in February this year.

Rather than face a judicial review, the DfE has now agreed to settle the case. In doing so, the government has committed to reform the guidance for schools on transgender issues and has awarded us £22,000 to cover legal costs.

In August of this year, The Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP, then Attorney General, [gave a speech](#) about how these guidelines will be shaped. In this speech she stated:

"The problem is that many schools and teachers believe – incorrectly - that they are under an absolute legal obligation to treat children who are gender questioning according to their preference, in all ways and all respects, from preferred pronouns to use of facilities and competing in sports. All this is sometimes taking place without informing their parents or taking into account the impact on other children. Anyone who questions such an approach is accused of transphobia. In my view, this approach is not supported by the law."

This therefore states that the approach of Church of England schools, and the guidance in *Valuing All God's Children* is not supported by the law. She added:

"Further, no child should be made to fear punishment or disadvantage for questioning what they are being taught, or refusing to adopt a preferred pronoun for a gender questioning child, or complaining about a gender questioning child using their toilets or changing rooms, or refusing to take part in activities promoted by Stonewall or other such organisations. The right to freedom of belief, thought, conscience and speech must be protected."

It is plain that the *Valuing All God's Children* entirely fails to address the important steps that are required in order to safeguard children as outlined by the Attorney-General. Therefore, Church of England schools, such as the one our sons attended, are violating the clear guidance from the then Attorney General in forcing children to affirm the acquired gender of fellow pupils and failing to require basic steps to be taken to keep children safe.

Now that the former Attorney General has made these clear statements about the law and how schools should respond to pupils who wish to identify in the opposite sex in support of our own position, we wanted to write to urge you to urgently review the Church of England's position on this. It is clear that *Valuing All God's Children* should be scrapped. The position of Church of England schools in affirming gender transition of young pupils and forcing pupils to comply with this is now untenable.

The government has openly criticised the practice of Church of England schools in this respect.

We therefore ask you to withdraw the *Valuing All God's Children* guidance as a matter of urgency for the sake of protecting the children. We also request a meeting with you to discuss these points and what the Church of England will do about them at your earliest convenience.

We are sure that you will agree that the safety and wellbeing of all God's children taught in Church of England schools is a matter of the highest importance, and we look forward to meeting with you to discuss what the Church of England will do to ensure that what happened in our sons' school does not happen again elsewhere.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Nigel and Sally Rowe. The signature on the left is 'N. Rowe' and the signature on the right is 'S. Rowe'.

Nigel & Sally Rowe

CC: The Revd Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer for the Church of England.