

Nigel & Sally Rowe

C/O Christian Concern  
70 Wimpole Street  
London W1G 8AX

The Most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury  
Lambeth Palace  
London SE1 7JU

January 15, 2024

Dear Archbishop Justin,

We feel prompted to write to you again to urge you to withdraw the damaging *Valuing All God's Children* guidance for Church of England Schools in the light of the government's publication of its draft guidance for gender questioning children. As you know, *Valuing All God's Children* persists in harmfully referring to "trans pupils" and in wrongly stating that "transgender issues may be mentioned as a fact in some people's lives."

We have written to you before about how six-year-old pupils were allowed to identify in the opposite sex in our sons' Church of England Primary school. We were disappointed that your reply to us did not engage with the issues raised. The Chief Education Officer of the Church of England, Nigel Genders also wrote in response but failed to acknowledge the serious and harmful problems with the *Valuing All God's Children* guidance.

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).

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. After receiving no support from the school or the diocese, we took our complaint to the Department of Education (DfE). We 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.

Rather than face a judicial review, the DfE agreed to settle the case. In doing so, the government committed to reform the guidance for schools on transgender issues and awarded us £22,000 to cover legal costs. The new guidance is what was promised to us in the settlement with the DfE.

The new guidance states clearly: “We have not used the term transgender to describe children. Under UK law children cannot obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate and therefore cannot change their legal sex.” This is a welcome statement of the law as it stands. Sadly, *Valuing All God’s Children* persists in wrongly and harmfully referring to “trans pupils.”

The government’s guidance states: “Primary school aged children should not have different pronouns to their sex-based pronouns used about them.” This is precisely what happened in our sons’ Church of England Primary School, and what we objected to. Our sons were told that they had to refer to a fellow pupil by their chosen pronouns. Church of England guidance for schools should clearly support the government’s position on this.

The government’s guidance also states that: “A child who is gender questioning should, in general, be held to the same uniform standards as other children of their sex at their school and schools may set clear rules to this effect.” This is contrary to what happened in our sons’ Church of England school where six-year-old pupils were allowed to dress as the opposite sex. Sadly, *Valuing All God’s Children*, contradicts the government’s guidance by stating that: “indirect discrimination could include an inflexible uniform policy that creates a particular difficulty for trans pupils.”

The government’s guidance states that the belief that someone can have a ‘gender’ that is different from their biological sex is “a contested belief.” The courts have labelled gender identity belief a philosophical view and that compelled belief in it would be unlawful. The Department’s draft guidance has called it ideology. Shockingly, *Valuing All God’s Children* states that “transgender issues may be mentioned as a fact in some people’s lives.”

The new government guidance demonstrates that we were right to challenge our sons’ Church of England school and to object to it allowing six-year-olds to socially transition. We feel vindicated by the government’s response. By letter of 14<sup>th</sup> July 2017, our children’s school, in consultation with the Diocese of Portsmouth, in relation to two primary school aged children who grew up alongside our own children, told us that the inability to recognise a transgender person as actually female or male is transphobic behaviour. Given the context we took this as a personal slight against us. Whereas the government’s draft guidance holds that: “*Other pupils, parents and teachers may hold protected religious or other beliefs that conflict with the decision that the school or college has made, these are legitimate views that must be respected.*” This is a far cry from the treatment we received, with the school representing contested legal views about equality obligations for young children as fact. Views which are at odds with the government’s position.

However, we are bitterly disappointed that the Church of England continues to recommend that its schools do allow young children to socially transition. As the expert evidence we submitted to the DofE shows, this is likely to be very harmful for all the children concerned. As the draft guidance states: “*They [primary aged pupils] are more vulnerable as they are less able to articulate their feelings and will have a less mature understanding of complicated issues.*” As such the Church of England is failing in its duty of care for the children in its schools.

Regardless of what the government says, the Church of England should be upholding biblical teaching about the differences between men and women and the scientific fact that people cannot change their biological sex. Sadly, the Church of England has failed to uphold these truths and continues to persist in upholding guidance that directly contradicts biblical truth and is harmful for children.

Once again, we urge you to withdraw *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.

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.  
Bishop of Stepney, Joanne Grenfell, lead safeguarding bishop.