LGBT+ Key Terms and Definitions

This resource is for all staff in school to refer to, in order to understand the terminology and definitions relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. Not all these terms will be used in the primary school setting but a sound understanding of the terms is useful to build confidence in teaching staff.

In terms of gender, it is important not to confuse sex with gender; male and female refers to biological sex, while man and woman refers to gender (and a person may identify as a gender that is not associated with their biological sex). When possible, it is best to avoid using phrases such as 'boys and girls' and instead use 'children'. It is also best to avoid activity suggestions that involve boys and girls working in separate teams or competing against one another. This will mean that any children who are questioning their gender, those who are gender-fluid or those diagnosed with gender dysphoria are not placed in the difficult position of deciding which group to join.

LGBT+

This is the umbrella term that is often used. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Plus. The 'Plus' denotes anyone who does not necessarily 'fit into' or identify with any of the other definitions; it ensures everyone in the community is included, whether they're unsure/questioning their identity or if they choose not to identify at all.

Bisexual

This refers to a person who has an emotional and/or sexual attraction towards more than one gender (such as a woman finding men and women attractive).

Coming Out

When a person first tells someone/others about their identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. A person might also come out as something else (the '+' in LGBT+), such as gender-fluid or pansexual.

Female

The term used to describe the biological sex of a person who can produce ova (eggs) and bear offspring.

Gay

Gay in its modern sense typically refers to homosexual men (a man who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards another man) but in some contexts it can be used of both men and women.

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Gender

The state of being (or identifying as) a man or a woman (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones) or somewhere on the gender spectrum, when gender is viewed as non-binary.

- **Cisgender** – Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were registered with at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.
- **The Gender Spectrum** – Many believe there are more than two genders; the genders of 'man' and 'woman' exist on a spectrum and a lot of people feel their gender fits somewhere between the two.
- **Gender-Fluid** – A person whose gender changes depending on how they feel that day, week, month, etc. may describe themselves as gender-fluid.
- **Gender Identity** – A person's internal sense of their own gender, whether a man, a woman or something else.
- **Gender Variant** – Someone who does not conform to the gender roles and behaviours that are thought to match the sex they were registered with at birth.
- **Gender Dysphoria** – Used to describe a sense of unease or distress that a person may experience because their biological sex does not align with their gender identity.
- **Gender Reassignment** – Another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo this usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender. It is a characteristic that is protected in the Equality Act 2010.

HBT – Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

Homophobia is the fear or dislike of homosexual people; biphobia is the fear or dislike of bisexual people; transphobia is the fear or dislike of transgender people. The term HBT bullying is used in schools when children experience bullying due to being LGBT+.

Homosexual

This might be considered a more medical term used to describe someone who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards someone of the same sex or gender. The term 'gay' is now more generally used.

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Intersex
This is a term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. This person may identify as male, female or non-binary.

Lesbian
A homosexual woman; a woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction towards another woman.

Male
The term used to describe the biological sex of a person who can produce spermatozoa (sperm).

Non-binary
The notion that gender does not comprise just two genders ('binary' meaning two) but rather can be seen as a spectrum; an umbrella term for a person who does not identify as male or female.

Pansexual
A pansexual person is someone who feels they could be sexually, emotionally or spiritually attracted to another person of any gender (the prefix 'pan' meaning 'all').

Pride Parade
Pride parades (also known as pride marches, pride events and pride festivals) are events celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, plus (LGBT+), culture and pride. The events also at times serve as demonstrations for legal rights such as same-sex marriage.

Pronoun
Words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation - for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender-neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their and ze/zir.

Questioning
The process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Queer
In the past this was a derogatory term for LGBT+ individuals. The term has now been reclaimed by LGBT+ young people in particular who don't identify with traditional categories around gender identity and sexual orientation. The term is still viewed to be derogatory by some.

Sex
Either of the two main categories (male and female) a person is registered with at birth on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Please note, it is important not to confuse 'sex' ('male' and 'female') with 'gender' ('men' and 'women').

Sexual Orientation
A person's emotional, romantic and or sexual attraction to another person.

Transgender (or Trans)
An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were registered with at birth. It may encompass one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, cross-dresser, non-binary, gender queer.

Transsexual
This term was used in the past as a more medical term (similarly with homosexual) to refer to someone who transitioned to live in the 'opposite' gender to the one that corresponds with the sex they were registered with at birth.

Transitioning
The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender they identify as. Each person's will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries but not all trans people want or are able to have this. It also might involve things like telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

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