

# **Maple Ridge Christian School (MRCS) Gender Identity and Expression Policy**

## **DRAFT - Discussion Purposes Only**

### **Introduction**

Since its founding in 1956, Maple Ridge Christian School (MRCS) has been committed to providing a Christ-centered education rooted in the infallible Word of God. As a school, we believe God has created each individual uniquely, reflecting His image and worthy of dignity and love. This policy on gender identity and expression seeks to reflect our commitment to Biblical truth with a compassionate approach to student care, in alignment with our foundational beliefs and legal responsibilities.

As set out in its Foundational Provisions through its Bylaws as based on the Bible, Maple Ridge Christian School (MRCS) is committed to Christ-centered education<sup>1</sup>. Although MRCS is a non-denominational school, it is rooted in protestant Christianity and has core religious beliefs and practices that are shared by members of many Christian churches. While individual members of MRCS may have different understandings of the Bible on many topics, there are certain core religious beliefs and practices that are shared within the MRCS community.

### **Biblical Foundation and Throughlines**

We believe that God created humans male and female, as reflected in Genesis 1:27<sup>2</sup>. Our approach is shaped by the following discipleship characteristics (throughlines), which guide our care for students:

**Image-Reflector:** Reflecting God's image, we represent Jesus' compassion and love. Our response to gender identity issues is grounded in upholding the inherent worth of every individual.

**Community-Server:** We strive to create a community of care and support. We engage with students' questions on gender identity in a manner that promotes peace and understanding.

**God-Worshipper:** Worship informs all aspects of life at MRCS. We honour God by

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<sup>1</sup> Foundational Provisions 61b

<sup>2</sup> Foundational Provisions 60b

upholding Biblical truth while supporting each student's journey.

**Justice-Promoter:** Recognizing the injustices faced by individuals, we commit to ensuring an environment free from discrimination and harassment for all students.

**Temple-Keeper:** We believe our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and approach each student's identity with respect for both their physical and spiritual well-being.

**Beauty-Creator:** We foster an environment where students can thrive, creatively contributing to a community that honours God's design and upholds grace and respect while honouring the diversity of God's creation.

**Creation-Caretaker:** As stewards of God's creation, we seek to foster a welcoming environment while holding to our foundational beliefs.

**Order-Discoverer:** Recognizing God's order in creation, we find harmony in supporting each student while adhering to a Biblical understanding of identity.

**Idolatry-Discerner:** We aim to guide students in understanding their identity through a Biblical perspective, discerning truth from societal pressures.

**Truth-Seeker:** We are committed to seeking truth in all areas, including gender, through a lens that reflects Scripture and fosters grace.

## **Foundational Beliefs and Theological Considerations**

We affirm that sex differences are an integral part of human identity, as part of God's created order.<sup>3</sup>

- **Biological Sex and Gender:** We believe that biological sex is a God-given aspect of personhood. Gender, while related to biological sex, may involve varying expressions allowing for flexibility without compromising our foundational provisions.
- **Pronouns and Identity:** In the area of using preferred pronouns, MRCS seeks to follow the example of Jesus, who came "full of grace and truth."<sup>4</sup> While some may view pronoun accommodation as inconsistent with truth-telling, others see it as an act of grace and respect for the individual.

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<sup>3</sup> Foundational Provisions 60b; Genesis 1&2

<sup>4</sup> John 1:14

## **Duty of Care and Legal Responsibilities**

MRCS is committed to ensuring a safe and discrimination-free environment in compliance with the BC Human Rights Code. While we respect freedom of religion, we also recognize our duty to provide a safe environment for all students, including those experiencing gender dysphoria. The school's policies will align with legal standards without compromising Biblical convictions as outlined in our foundational provisions.

## **Parent/School Partnership**

Parents are the primary disciplers of their children<sup>5</sup>, and MRCS is committed to maintaining an open and transparent partnership:

- **Parental Involvement:** Parents will be informed if their child expresses concerns about gender identity or is referred to counseling regarding gender identity/expression in a manner which respects the student involved. No decisions regarding accommodations will be made without parental involvement
- **Curriculum Communication:** Any curriculum that involves topics related to gender identity will be communicated to parents in advance, fostering a transparent relationship between school and home.

## **Procedure**

This procedure outlines the steps Maple Ridge Christian School (MRCS) staff will take when a student discloses questions or concerns about gender identity, expression, or gender dysphoria. The process is designed to ensure consistent, compassionate, and transparent communication between the school, the student, and the family, while supporting the student's well-being.

### **1. Initial Disclosure**

- When a student discloses questions or concerns about gender identity, expression, or gender dysphoria, the staff member should:
  - Listen actively and respectfully, ensuring the student feels heard and supported.

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<sup>5</sup> Foundational Provisions 61c

- Avoid making immediate promises or commitments regarding actions or accommodations.
- The staff member will inform the student that they will inform school leadership.

## **2. Informing School Leadership**

- The staff member receiving the disclosure must promptly inform a member of the school's leadership team
- Leadership will confidentially document the disclosure

## **3. Engaging Parents/Guardians**

- A member of the leadership team will contact the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible to:
  - Inform them of the disclosure.
  - Schedule a meeting to discuss the student's concerns and needs.
- If the student expresses fear or hesitation about involving their parents/guardians, the school leadership will:
  - Listen to the student's concerns.
  - Consult with appropriate professionals (e.g. counselor, pastoral staff) to determine the best approach for family engagement.

## **4. Collaborative Meetings**

- An initial meetings will be held with the student, parents/guardians, and relevant school staff to:
  - Discuss the student's experiences and concerns.
  - Explore ways the school and family can work together to support the student.
- Further meetings will be held in collaboration with appropriate professionals (counselor, pastoral staff, etc.) to discuss:
  - Outline any potential accommodations or adjustments that may be necessary.

## **5. Developing a Support Plan**

- Based on the collaborative meetings, a written support plan will be developed to address:
  - Academic, social, or emotional support needs.
  - Any agreed-upon accommodations (e.g., name usage, privacy provisions).
  - A communication plan for maintaining ongoing dialogue between the school, student, and family.

- Accommodations that will be considered include:
  - Preferred name: MRCS will accommodate the use of a student's preferred name, as determined by the student and their parents
  - Washroom/change room: Private washrooms or change room facilities will be made available to students seeking privacy
  - Pronoun usage:
    - In the area of using preferred pronouns, MRCS seeks to follow the example of Jesus, who came "full of grace and truth." While some may view pronoun accommodation as inconsistent with truth-telling, others see it as an act of grace and respect for the individual.
    - The school seeks to balance its biblical convictions with its duty to provide a respectful and non-discriminatory environment. Pronoun requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with parents in their primary role as disciplers of their children (Deut. 6:6-7), school leadership, and pastoral staff, always guided by Scripture and with care for the student's dignity.

## **6. Providing Ongoing Support**

- The school will assign a designated staff member (e.g., counselor, teacher, or administrator) to serve as the primary point of contact for the student and family.
- Regular check-ins will be scheduled to monitor the student's well-being and adjust the support plan as needed.

## **7. Confidentiality and Documentation**

- All discussions, plans, and actions will be documented securely and treated with the utmost confidentiality.
- Information will be shared only with those directly involved in supporting the student, unless required by law.

## **8. Community Resources**

- The school will provide families with access to appropriate external resources, such as counseling services or community organizations, as needed.

## **Review and Feedback**

This procedure will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and responsive to the needs of the school community. Feedback from families, staff, and students will be considered in refining the process.

## **Conflict Resolution**

If conflicts arise regarding accommodations, MRCS will engage in a collaborative process involving parents, students, and staff. The goal will be to find a resolution that respects both the student's needs and the school's Biblical framework. Appeals can be directed to the Lead Principal and, if necessary, the MRCS Board.

## **Conclusion**

MRCS is committed to upholding Biblical truth while showing compassion to all students. This policy reflects our desire to support students navigating complex questions of gender identity, while remaining faithful to the Word of God.