



Valuing All God's Children

'Valuing All God's Children' was first published in 2014 in response to research showing homophobic bullying was something which needed particular attention in Church schools. It was re-written in 2017 in the light of the Church of England Vision for Education and then updated again in 2019.

In the past weeks, a pressure group has issued a series of press releases, quotes and a petition calling for Valuing All God's Children to be rescinded, claiming that it states that "children as young as five should be affirmed if they want to identify as the opposite gender".

This is simply false. To clarify matters of fact:

- Valuing All God's Children has been welcomed both by Church of England schools and in non-Church of England settings as a valued resource.
- The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination (both direct and indirect) and harassment in various fields on the ground of certain 'protected characteristics.' Schools and academies are subject to English law and those who lead our schools need guidance and frameworks to apply it in a way which is sensitive to young people's individual needs and circumstances, and which supports good pastoral care.
- The Church of England's Education Office guidance does not go beyond the law, but rather gives a practical advisory framework, underpinned by our Christian theological conviction, to be a resource for schools.

Valuing All God's Children does **not** say that children as young as five should be affirmed if they want to identify as the opposite gender. It doesn't use the language of affirmation at all, anywhere.

This is a misrepresentation of a resource which is designed to help schools ensure all children are treated with the dignity they deserve.

In chapter 9, discussing issues for **secondary** schools, the guidance does say:

"It is also important that pupils can explore issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and other factors that make healthy self-embodiment challenging. Specifically it is important that pupils understand the issues for those who feel they are trans/transgender and may be in the process of transition, understanding the impact that bullying has on them."

We stand by this statement. It is about helping young people to value and respect everyone as cherished and loved by God, regardless of gender identity or sexuality. It also mirrors the government's Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance:

"Sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner. When teaching about these topics, it must be recognised that young people may be discovering or understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity. There should be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships. This should be integrated appropriately into the RSE programme, rather

than addressed separately or in only one lesson (p26 of [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance](#) (publishing.service.gov.uk))

It is also untrue to describe Valuing All God's Children as influenced by 'Mermaids' as has been claimed. Mermaids had no involvement in or influence on the preparation of the guidance.

Valuing All God's Children does not recommend any particular third-party resource or organisation.

Prior to the 2019 revision, the document did include an appendix of resources, making clear that these were not, and could not be 'recommendations'. However, owing to the possibility for misinterpretation, this appendix was removed, with a [clear explanation for this added to the website page on which the guidance sits](#).

Recent press coverage has pointed to an out-of-date version of the guidance prior to 2019 on a separate website, rather than the [correct Church of England document](#).

The Church of England's advisory structures must be open and accountable, and it is only right that our guidance should be open to scrutiny and challenge. However, when schoolrooms become legal battlegrounds, this is seldom to the benefit of children.

This is an area in which we acknowledge there are a range of views, and schools are not exempt from scrutiny and challenge. We have welcomed the Government's indication that updated guidance will be issued on transgender matters and about how schools should respond to them. All our policies are reviewed regularly, and in light of updated legislation and Government guidance.

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