

FAQs: Challenging Questions Children Might Ask

NOTE: In answering all questions raised by pupils, it is important to respond consistently with PSHE Guidelines and your school's policies.

1. Maybe it was different in the past, but now it is obvious that boys and girls should be treated fairly and be able to do whatever they want to do – so why do we need lessons about this?

It's great that you already know how important it is that we can all be ourselves, be valued for who we are, and be treated fairly. But there are still sometimes pressures in our society to behave in certain ways depending on whether you are a boy or a girl, or a man or a woman. These ideas can sometimes make it harder to be who we want to be, and fulfil our individual potential. That is why it is important that you can recognise and challenge these limiting ideas, and follow your own path in life.

2. Do you think everyone should be the same or think the same?

Not at all. Everyone is unique and different – what we like, what we think, and how we behave is different for everyone. These differences should be respected and valued. We want you to think for yourself about who you want to be and what is important to you and not be limited by ideas about what you should do, think or like based on whether you are a boy or a girl.

3. Aren't boys and girls just different from each other?

There are some biological, physical differences between men and women, boys, and girls. And from when we are really young, we are also taught to fit into certain boxes – like boys are meant to be strong and not cry and girls are meant to be kind and look pretty. But we are not naturally different in personalities, or the kinds of toys or games we like. And there is almost no difference in physical strength or stamina in the primary years. The truth is, we are all unique and different individuals.

4. Are you telling me I should not like football or other 'boyish' things?

Not at all. We want you to be yourself and fulfil your individual potential. So it is fine for a boy to like football and a girl to like pink, for example. No-one should feel they have to conform to narrow expectations about what they should do, what they should like, or who they should be friends with.

5. My mum stays at home to look after me and my sister and my dad goes to work – after what we've been discussing in class I feel a bit worried that this might be wrong.

Thank you for sharing your worries, it's really important for us to talk about these things. There's absolutely nothing wrong with your mum staying at home and your dad going to work — that works really well for some families. The great thing about families is that they are all different and can share love and care in lots of different ways. What we're talking about in this lesson is making sure that people aren't told they have to do something just because they're a boy or a girl, or a man or a woman. So of course it is also fine for mums to work and dads to stay home, or both can work — it's about having the choice and not being limited by gender. Remember that families are made up in lots different ways, maybe living with one parent or with grandparents or with two mums, two dads. What is important is that we have choices around what we do and the roles that we take.

6. Isn't it more important to talk about racism? I see lots of that on TV.

Yes, racism is really important to talk about — and so is gender. They're both about treating people fairly and making sure no one is held back or left out because of who they are. It's not about choosing one or the other — we need to care about all kinds of unfairness. Sometimes people are treated unfairly because of their race, sometimes because of their gender, and sometimes both. That's why we learn about all of it, so we can help make things better for everyone. And for some people, these things overlap — for example, if someone is treated unfairly because they're both a girl and Black or Asian, they might face more challenges. That's why it's important to notice how different parts of someone's identity can affect their experiences.

7. Can't everyone choose the job they want to do nowadays?

We should all be able to follow our chosen career or job. Although it is a lot more flexible than in the past, some jobs are still mostly done by men or by women – so some people might feel it is better for men or women to do them. And unpaid work (looking after someone in your family for example) can make a big difference to what job or career people do. But it's great that there are more and more examples of people pursuing the job they want to do, whatever their gender – and this lesson tells you about some of them.

8. If a boy likes different things from most boys, does that mean he is gay?

Liking different things from other boys doesn't mean someone is gay – it just means they like different things! Everyone is unique. People can enjoy all sorts of activities, clothes, or colours, no matter whether they're a boy or a girl. And it's also fine to be friends with whoever you want, whatever their gender.

9. Where do gender stereotypes come from?

We are exposed to ideas what we should do or think, based on our gender, from an early age. These ideas can come from many different places – TV, social media, books, other people we know. But these ideas are not fixed – they can and do change, and it is important for you to make up your own mind about them.

10. Can a girl turn into a boy, or a girl into a boy?

Different people have different feelings about who they are. We don't all feel the same, and that's okay. In our school, we respect everyone and treat each other kindly.