

We use pronouns every day when we are identifying and referring to people – a lot of the time you use them without even realising.

In English speaking countries, the most common personal pronouns are ‘she, her and hers’ (which are typically used to refer to cisgender* and transgender* women) and ‘he, him and his’ (which are typically used to refer to cisgender and transgender men). However, there are many other pronouns that someone may use.

These include:

- Sie/hir/hirs
- They/them/theirs
- Ze/zir/zirs
- Xe/xim/xirs and more.

There are many reasons why someone may use pronouns outside of ‘she/her’ and ‘he/him’. Some might use these personal pronouns because they don’t feel like a man or a woman. Some might use them because they feel like both a man and a woman. Some might feel that they do not want to identify with just one set of pronouns so might use some interchangeably. [The Trevor Project](#) notes that ‘25% of LGBTQ+ youth use they/them exclusively, a combination of he/him, she/her or they/them, or neo pronouns such as ze/zir or fae/faer.’ It is important to remember that everyone’s pronouns are unique to them and pronouns alone do not tell you what an individual’s gender identity is.

[MyPronouns.org](#) notes that ‘often, people make assumptions about the gender of another person based on the person’s appearance or name. These assumptions aren’t always correct, and the act of making an assumption (even if correct) sends a potentially harmful message.’ Using someone’s correct pronouns is a way of respecting them and creating an inclusive environment.

Ask yourself: If a student in your school came out as trans or non-binary (an umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity does not confirm to the gender binary of ‘man’ or ‘woman’), or a trans student joined your school, would they feel comfortable and supported?

If not, why not? Is it because of a lack of understanding amongst staff and students? Is the school environment itself inclusive? Are there enough policies in place which promote respect and understanding of pronouns?



Cisgender -
someone whose gender identity aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth

Transgender -
someone whose gender identity does not align with the gender they were assigned at birth



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This is why it is important for all Anti-Bullying Ambassadors to act as allies and run campaigns which promote inclusivity and understanding of the importance of respecting everybody's pronouns



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WHAT ANTI-BULLYING AMBASSADORS CAN DO:

- 1 RAISE AWARENESS**

A lot of transphobic language and behaviour can come from a lack of understanding; therefore, it is important to run campaigns which educate the entire school community on the importance of respecting pronouns. This could be through running assemblies, workshops or sessions during your form time with your peers. A great way to get started would be to explain the difference between gender and sex assigned at birth. You can access our free resource which covers this [here](#).
- 2 LEAD BY EXAMPLE**

As an Anti-Bullying Ambassador team, you could make a concerted effort to embed pronoun recognition into your daily school life. For example, if you run workshops and assemblies, you could introduce yourself by saying your name and pronouns (if you feel comfortable doing so). Furthermore, you could create lanyards or name badges which include pronouns and encourage teachers to use these or include their pronouns in their email signatures which will help lead to a whole-school approach.
- 3 BE RESPECTFUL**

While educating your peers on the use of different pronouns, it is important to ensure no one feels put on the spot or forced into disclosing their identity, as this may be something that they are not ready to do. A young person might choose to share their pronouns with certain groups of people and might not yet feel ready to share these with the rest of their school year or class. Respecting each person's choice is so important to ensure everyone feels comfortable and valued. As Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, you can make it clear that people have the option to share their pronouns with whoever they want to, and just because other people are sharing theirs, doesn't mean they must share too.
- 4 EXTRA SUPPORT**

As Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, you could put 'Thought Boxes' around the school, where people can put in any concerns or worries they have. If a student discloses they want to speak to someone about their gender identity, you could encourage them to reach out and speak to a trusted adult or teacher. Alternatively, you can direct them to The Diana Award Crisis Messenger Service. This provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK. If you are a young person in crisis, you can text DA to 85258. Trained volunteers will listen to how you're feeling and help you with the next step towards feeling better.

THE LINK TO BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

At The Diana Award, we define bullying behaviour as: **'repeated, negative behaviour that is intended to make others feel upset, uncomfortable or unsafe.'**

As An Anti-Bullying Ambassador, it is important to encourage the whole school community to be Upstanders against bullying behaviour.

End Bullying Now notes that **'transphobic bullying is behaviour or language that makes a child or young person feel unwelcome or marginalised'** due to their gender identity. Examples of this could include people deliberately using the wrong pronouns when referring to someone. **Transphobic bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a hate crime under the Equality Act 2010.**

If you witness someone experiencing bullying behaviour related to their pronouns, you can be an Upstander by:

- If you feel comfortable and safe doing so, telling the person displaying the bullying behaviour that their behaviour is unacceptable and they should respect everyone's pronouns. If possible, you could try to have a calm conversation with this person/group to explain why it is important to respect people's pronouns.
- If you do not feel comfortable stepping in, that is okay. You can still be an Upstander by telling a trusted adult or teacher in school about what has happened.
- Make sure to check in on the person who has experienced bullying behaviour and offer them your support. A kind word can make all the difference.
- Chat to your Anti-Bullying Ambassador team about running some of the anti-bullying campaign ideas listed above.

To access more resources on creating inclusive spaces in school and online, be sure to check out our [Resource Centre](#). You can also view our [blog post on why pronouns matter](#). For a list of support organisations who can offer further guidance, resources and support, check out our [Support Centre](#).

We're proud to be the only charity set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her belief that young people have the power to change the world. It's a big mission but there are two things within it that we focus our charity's efforts on – young people and change.

Throughout all of our programmes and initiatives, 'change' for and by young people is central, including our anti-bullying work which encourages change in attitudes and behaviours.

We hope you found this resource useful and wish you all the best in your anti-bullying journey. If you would like to help us create more resources and train even more Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, you can make a £5 donation by texting CHANGE 5 to 70470 or visit diana-award.org.uk/donate

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