

SAFEGUARDING SUBSCRIPTION RESOURCES  
**GENDER BIAS - WHAT IS IT AND  
WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?**


Lucie Welch  
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# WHAT IS GENDER BIAS?

Gender bias is essentially prejudice or favouritism based on someone's gender. It can be conscious or unconscious, and it can manifest in many different ways, from subtle stereotypes and assumptions to explicit discrimination.

Here are some examples of gender bias:



### Stereotyping

Making assumptions that men are better or stronger than women or vice versa. Using gender to say how a particular person should act or behave.




### Microaggression

Making small, but offensive comments or jokes about someone's gender.



### Discrimination

Denying someone a particular opportunity or fair treatment because of their gender.



### Sexual harassment

Unwanted sexual advances or behaviour that creates a hostile learning environment.

Gender bias can have a wide range of negative consequences, both for individuals and for society as a whole. It can limit people's opportunities, make them feel unsafe or unwelcome, and perpetuate inequality.

## Key Statistics

- A quarter of all secondary school teachers say they witness gender stereotyping and discrimination in their school on a daily basis, and a further quarter say they witness it on a weekly basis.
- Over a third (34%) of primary school teachers say they witness gender stereotyping in their school on at least a weekly basis. Over half (54%) say they witness it on at least a termly basis.
- 36% of female students in mixed-sex schools say they have personally been treated differently on account of their gender, compared to 15% of male students.



"It's Just Everywhere" A study of Sexism in Schools- NEU & UK Feminista- 2017

## Tackling Gender Bias and Sexism in schools:

Staff need to be proactive in addressing gender bias and sexism in schools and must ensure they are challenging both students and adults if they hear sexist language being used or attitudes that promote a gender bias.



**Self-awareness is key:** Staff should reflect on their own biases and understand how they might be impacting their teaching and the way they communicate with their students. Staff need to be mindful of their language, behaviour, and expectations for students of different genders.

**Promote inclusivity:** Use gender-neutral language and celebrate diversity in the classroom. Incorporate female and non-binary role models into curriculum and discussions and encourage students to challenge gender stereotypes and express themselves authentically.



**Create a safe space:** Establish clear expectations for respectful behaviour and address any instances of bias or discrimination promptly. Foster open communication and encourage students to speak up if they feel uncomfortable or unheard.

**Staff CPD:** Ensure staff stay informed about current research on gender bias and best practices for creating inclusive classrooms.



**Remember, combating gender bias is an ongoing process. By being aware, proactive, and committed to creating an equitable learning environment, teachers can make a significant difference in the lives of their students.**



# WHY IS GENDER BIAS AN ISSUE?

**It's pervasive and often unconscious:** Gender stereotypes, like girls being less interested in STEM or boys being naturally disruptive, are deeply ingrained in society and can unintentionally influence teachers' interactions and expectations.

It manifests in various ways:



**Language:** Using gendered language like "boys are better at maths" or "girls are more sensible" only reinforces stereotypes.



**Behaviour:** Calling on boys to help with certain tasks- such as moving the benches in assembly or assuming girls need help with physical activities can create unequal opportunities.



**Curriculum:** Focusing on key men from history with limited female representation sends a message about who matters.

**The consequences are real:** Gender bias can limit students' academic achievement, self-esteem, and confidence. It can discourage girls from pursuing certain fields and boys from expressing emotions or seeking help. It can create a hostile learning environment for students who don't conform to traditional gender roles.

## Addressing stereotyping and discrimination of LGBTQ+ children:

There may be children in your setting who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. It is important that staff are aware that however a child identifies, this should not impact the way they are treated in school.

Despite possibly not conforming to traditional gender stereotypes, these children are still entitled to be treated fairly, with hurtful, unfair or discriminatory behaviour being tackled 17







# Services For Education

## Services For Education Limited

Unit 3 Holt Court, Holt Street  
Birmingham, B7 4AX

[www.servicesforeducation.co.uk](http://www.servicesforeducation.co.uk)

T: +44 (0)121 366 9950

E: [safeguarding@servicesforeducation.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@servicesforeducation.co.uk)

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