

Queen Anne High School, Dunfermline, September 2022

Transcript of “Supporting Transgender Pupils - Pupil Equalities Film”

Rachel Watson (mother):

My name is Rachel Watson and I am the mother of a 14 year old, non-binary kid called Roo. So when Roo was about 10 years old, they started wearing their little brothers clothes, they're quite close in age and size, so it was easy. And we just sort of let it be for a while. And then I thought it had gone on for kind of a few months, and I thought, there's a whole range of reasons why this might be the case, starting from boys clothes are more comfier, because they are, to I want to be a boy, and like a spectrum in between of reasons why they might be doing that.

So we had a chat. And I sent Roo away with some kind of resources to look for. And it happened during pride month, which was quite handy. So kind of TV, YouTube had loads of things about pride month. And they came back to me and said, I think I'm going to embarrass my kid by saying this, I think I'm gender fluent. And I said, I think you mean fluid, darling. And if that's how you feel that's great. I wasn't sure that that's what it was. I suspected that they were more of a non-binary kind of a neither gender, kind more strongly, rather than somebody that switches between the two. So I said, go and research what non-binary means.

And then still, even with, I think I did a good job, I think I was supportive, I think that I was quite well educated before the conversation. And even with offering that kind of love and support. Roo still kind of wrote me a coming out letter and was really nervous about telling me that they were non-binary, even though it was me that had suggested that they might be. And so it was still, it was a massive deal, and it was really quite emotional and stressful for them. And I remember we sat on my bed side-by-side. And I told Roo, I said, if there's any way that I've kind of tried to raise you, it's to know that you're not limited by society's expectations of how a gender should perform. You know, boys don't cry, and girls can't drive and all that nonsense. It just doesn't, I just don't think it should exist, honestly. And the relief that kind of washed over Roo's face, when they knew that I was accepting them as they are was just palpable.

Ash (pupil):

Hi, I'm Ash, and I'm a non-binary pupil at Queen Anne High School, and my pronouns are they/them. Queen Anne's been, like, really helpful in my coming out and also how I discovered my identity. They made it a comfortable and, like, supportive environment, especially in guidance and my teachers, so I was able to properly figure out who I was as a person without feeling that, like, heavy judgement that I usually, well I was expecting to feel.

And it's also been really good with when I came out because it meant that I wasn't as, again, judged because I had that support system to help me feel better about telling people my name and pronouns. The equalities club has done a lot of stuff for the school but also for Fife. And one of the main things we did was the Fife equalities network, which was when we met up with a lot of different equality clubs, from loads of different schools in Fife, and we spoke about, like, what they do, and also in general, like, we made a lot of friends. And we spoke about our identities and how we've had it in school, which was a cool way to compare

our experiences. But we went to Glenrothes, they came here, and the teacher who ran equalities at the time, Miss Hudson, was really, really passionate about it, which made it feel like a lot less of a kind of duty and more of a, like a fun club activity. And now with Miss Duff running it as well, it feels, you know, it's a nice space to be and I'm excited for, like, what we do with it next.

There are a couple of things that aren't so great, but one of the things that I think I'd like to see change is teachers approaches in classrooms, specifically, to transphobia and homophobia. Because a lot of times you hear something that you know, obviously isn't okay. And teachers will just shout, but I'd much rather, like, for example, with what my English teacher does Miss Dodkins, she instead of shouting at the student would just educate them, as well as, like, Miss Ballantyne. And a lot of my teachers that have kind of learned that, you know, shouting at someone who isn't actually aware that what they're saying is hurtful doesn't really help, but it's made me feel a lot better when I see teachers taking a head on approach instead of just brushing past it.

Kye (pupil):

My name is Kye *[surname removed]*. I'm a 16 year old transgender pupil of Queen Anne High School. The school has supported me in a lot of different ways. There was the pride club, and a lot of different teachers who have opposed a lot of transphobia and homophobia in classes. One of the projects I've led in the school is the S1 health and wellbeing fair. We went down to the assembly hall and we spoke to a lot of S1s about pride club and what it meant and what we did. A lot of the S1s joined, too much for us to handle. At Queen Anne I've led a lot of assemblies and talks to a lot of other year groups. We've talked about what it means to be transgender and how to combat bullying and homophobia in the school. One of the great things Queen Anne has done is implementing gender neutral bathrooms.

Pandora (pupil):

I'm Pandora and I'm an ally for trans students at Queen Anne. I've helped in lots of different projects at the school, including things such as putting in the gender neutral toilet and talking to both teachers and pupils about inclusion at the school and trying to support them in any way we can. We created a presentation to show to the teachers to show about gender roles and similar and then took lots of questions from them so that they can have a better understanding. We also made a presentation to show to all the year groups during the assemblies and similar to help them understand the diversity at the school. I've been asked to speak about, sort of, what the school could do to be more inclusive and diverse. But I have to admit, Queen Anne as a school is pretty diverse. As I said, it's mostly good. But one thing that I'd like to see is more teachers, sort of, be more open about their pronouns and things like that, really just to make other students feel comfortable expressing themselves about it.

Mars (pupil):

My name is Mars *[surname removed]*, and I'm an S2 transgender pupil of Queen Anne High School. A lot of our teachers have created safe spaces within their classrooms and it definitely feels a lot better to talk to our teachers, I feel more safe and feel like I can share with my teachers without worrying that I'm going to be judged for who I am, or my identity. I changed my name roughly around S1. I talked to my guidance teacher about it for a while. And I wasn't too open about it for maybe a couple of months, until I was given the

opportunity to talk to my entire class about myself and my identity and what I feel comfortable with and that's...and I faced a lot of support with, meanwhile doing that. And a lot of our teachers have supported me with changing my name and correcting other pupils on pronouns and names.

Lynx (pupil):

Hi, my name is Lynx and I'm a transgender pupil in Queen Anne High School and I prefer the pronouns they/he/it. One of the things that Queen Anne has done that helped me out was they changed my name on the register really quickly. And I think hearing my name for the first time on the register really sort of just helped me feel more comfortable. And they were extremely supportive and with every sort of tweak that I told them, they went along with it with no questions asked.

Debbie (mother):

My name is Debbie and my son Kye is in S5 in school. He is transgender male. He came out to me about four years ago, he came out as gay first, which was not a shock to me. Not even a little bit. But even so he knew I was really understanding he still got one of his friends from school to phone me and leave a voicemail telling me that Kye was gay and he was too scared to tell me. And I remember that day because I thought "What an idiot. Why would you be scared, I've done nothing but make it clear that you are accepted here, but". So I was a little bit upset actually that he didn't trust me to come to me straight himself.

But since then, I think that was a bit of a learning curve for me as well because I thought well there's something wrong if he wasn't able to come to me in that moment. So I put a lot of effort in, in myself. Which I'm glad because around the corner was a few changes. So then he came out as non-binary. I really struggled with non-binary pronouns, I was okay with the concept of non-binary, obviously, but oh gosh, I really, really took me a lot of effort to try and get them right.

And no sooner as I thought, "Oh, I've nailed this", he comes and tells me, actually, I think I'm a boy. Huh, okay, so I've to start again, so we're on to he and him. And I gotta be honest, I was really sad at points because, you know, obviously, I had a, I gave birth to a little girl and, and I had all my memories were of, of Kye as this girl, and I had all these photos and, but I think what helped me, I think, come to terms of it...because I think you do have to come to terms with it, you know, it's a loss. You're gaining so much, though, you're gaining this confident child who, you know, they're, they're suddenly becoming themselves, and they start to blossom once they become themselves. But I had to let go of the kind of future that I thought he was going to have. Or I thought he was going to have, more than what he thought he was going to have.

But once I got my head around it, and actually just threw myself into it, I thought if I'm gonna do this, I'm actually going to do it. It was, it was empowering for us as well to...and I think Kye saw that in us. I think he saw that we loved him so much that it was okay to be whatever you wanted to be. And I always made a joke to Kye when he was growing up that I don't care if you marry a man, a woman or a goat. So Kye always came home and said, "well, at least I'm not marrying a goat, Mum". So I have thought, well, yeah, probably that is a good thing.

But you know, you love your child and that's all you really want is for them to be happy, it doesn't really matter about anything else. Apart from his friends, definitely the pride club in school, he really enjoys attending the events that they hold. And he's actually thrown himself into it a lot more this year. And he was really proud to be able to head up a few things a bit, because he's a bit older. And he's so much further along in his transition.

But also, more recently, the guidance teacher that he has now has really taken up a lot of... because Kye has a lot of anxiety about things because obviously he's been through a lot. And I sometimes struggle to get that point across. But the guidance teacher in the school is really good. So, you know, if we support our kids, and to make them feel confident in themselves, then the things that happen in school, or on the bus, or out in public, they don't get as affected by them because they know there is a safe place for them and they are loved and it is okay to be them. So it's really important for us to make sure he knows that. Doesn't matter what he is, who he is, or how he wants to live his life. It's okay. But for parents whose kids are going through this, this transition is just hang in there because it does get better. It does get easier. It is hard, not gonna pretend it's not hard. At times, it's devastating. But at times, it's so exhilarating to know that your child is free and happy and confident. And that's all you really want is for them to be themselves.

Linsay Duff (teacher):

I'm Linsay Duff. I'm a physics teacher here at Queen Anne's High School and I'm the teacher lead for the pride club for the pupils. One of the initiatives that I led during lockdown was a project for LGBT History Month, which is in February, I asked fellow staff members to submit a Flipgrid video telling their fellow staff and pupils about their particular LGBT hero, and why that person was such a positive influence in their life. I think it was a really positive, again, a really positive experience for pupils to see that their teachers had these heroes who were LGBT and like them. And hopefully I think that we all learned about some people that we hadn't maybe heard of before or maybe learned that they were LGBT and we didn't know that. So I think that was a really positive experience.

It's really important that we are embedding LGBT people into the curriculum as part of a new Scottish Government initiative. We're the first country in the world to be doing this and it's really important for pupils, both LGBT and non-LGBT pupils, to see that there are many successful LGBT people throughout history in all fields, whether it's sport, or history, or science or art, that these people have rich and varied lives and are successful and are making contributions to human history, and that they're really important, and they should be celebrated.

We're obviously doing something right here at Queen Anne, I think, because we have an absolutely huge number of pupils attending the pride club, we've had to split it into two rooms because there's so many people want to come along at lunchtime and share their experiences.

I think that things are getting better here at Queen Anne, particularly for transgender pupils, now that the government has given us some guidelines and sort of laid out a process for us to follow to help them after pupils come out and might want to change their name or their pronouns. It's a much easier process now. And hopefully, that will continue to get better as more pupils feel comfortable and able to come out. From speaking to some of the pupils at

pride club who came out a couple of years ago, they were sort of complaining a little bit and saying like, "Oh, I spent ages trying to get my name changed and now people who want to change their name, it happens really quickly". And then they stopped and they were like, "No, that's actually a really good thing. I'm really glad that it's easier for people now". So that's definitely a positive sign for the future.

Gareth Surgey (teacher):

My name is Gareth Surgey known to the pupils as Mr Surgey. I am a CDT teacher, primarily teaching engineering science just now. And I've been at Queen Anne for oh my goodness me, that's a long time now, 17 years I think it is I've been at Queen Anne. The challenges of parents night when it comes to getting names, gender, pronouns right, it is significant for many staff. We also have the issue of maybe the child hasn't communicated that home. And so that will create a bit of angst for a teacher because we all want to get that sort of thing right for that child. So this is a cultural shift that we need to be aware of and it's not going to happen overnight. But as teachers, we need to be alive to that and hopefully, both the student and the parent will be aware that this won't happen overnight. And that it is a cultural, it's a massive cultural change that needs to happen. And we've legislated for it. But you can't just legislate for something and expect it to happen. It has to be embraced and it has to be considered. And it will happen, but it will take time.

Gerry Dewar (teacher):

Hi, my name is Gerry Dewar, I'm a principal teacher at guidance at Queen Anne High School in Dunfermline. I've been in the role of guidance for the last ten years, and the last six years have been at Queen Anne High School. When a young person comes out as being trans at Queen Anne my first thought straightaway is how much of a privilege that is to, you know, be the person that they have chosen to speak to in that moment. I think it's important at that point in time that you don't panic, and you just listen to what they've got to say, and try and offer as much support as you possibly can.

There'll be times where you're not sure of what to do next but you need to reassure that youngster that you will obviously take them seriously, not judge them, listen to what they've got to say, and then try and advise them as best you possibly can. I would always ask them what support they would like to receive from me and from the school and the wider school community in general. And then pretty much take it from there.

At this point is always good to have the conversation regarding any name change or pronouns that the youngster would like to use. It's also important to find out if those pronouns are going to be in use all the time, or only in certain situations. It's also a good idea to ask permission if you can share this information with staff in school, who will that be: will it be all staff or just the classroom teachers for that individual?

It's also important to know how things are at home and if home are aware of the situation because in many cases when a youngster comes out as being trans, they're not. Parents are not aware. And we have to be extremely delicate in that situation because it's not our place to then contact home to effectively out that person. So we need to establish who knows what, are they being supported at home, and if not, will that conversation take place at any given point in the future? Once you've established that, if home aware you might want to discuss with home, but that's not necessary.

I would always finish the chat with the youngster asking if they feel supported and also planning to meet up with them again in the very near future to check to make sure that everything's okay.

Okay, it's my job as a guidance teacher to try and remove any barriers that our youngsters have to reach their potential. So as a result in PSE lessons, we tackle LGBT issues, mostly in S2 and S3. I think what this allows us to do is to have that conversation in class, open the door for children then to come and approach guidance with any concerns or queries they have. They are part of these discussions in a classroom and as a result they are seeing teachers openly challenging any prejudiced or discriminatory comments. By tackling these issues in PSE it allows us to challenge and educate youngsters on, you know, LGBT issues. And I do think that youngsters these days as a whole are much more accepting and tolerant, certainly than they were when I was younger.

Dr T (teacher):

So hi, I'm Dr T. I just go by Dr T because I have different last names and I teach modern studies, history and geography here at Queen Anne. I use they pronouns. Meaning that I don't use Mr or Ms. I use Dr as well because I have a PhD in human geography, that makes it easier. Otherwise, many people use Mx instead of Mr or Ms. And, yeah, so basically, I'm non-binary, queer non-binary, which really just means that I've never felt I was a boy or girl growing up. And I still don't feel a man or a woman. So, so yeah, I've been using they pronouns ever since I found out what they were.

I grew up in a relatively conservative environment in Central Europe, and then the US, and growing up I had no idea what they were. So I actually, I can imagine where many adults in among the teachers and parents come from as well, because like, for us growing up in the 90s, for instance, like, it just wasn't a thing. And it wasn't for me either when I was in high school. When I was our students age I didn't have these tools. I didn't have a language to talk about myself, I just felt I was neither a boy or a girl. I just didn't know what it was. It was like a child. Now I'm just a person. So I learned later on, living in California in my 20s later half my life. And I finally was like, okay, that's me, I have, now I have words to describe who I am. And that was extremely liberating.

So I can, I can understand where many adults come from and I feel we should be really happy that our kids have these tools now. And so maybe you can actually grow up more happy and free than some of us did. See, I moved to Scotland this year, actually, after a while in England. I love it here, way better than England. And I feel really safe here finally after moving around a lot. And I found a community at Queen Anne that actually made me feel welcome. I feel like I'm actually focused on my job, doing my job well, as opposed to constantly feeling worried about not being able to be myself.

I think the best moment for me was actually early on, a couple of months ago the principal literally told me, "You're so flamboyant. We need you." And for me to felt needed and wanted for being different, that was, I mean, that really made me feel welcome, and then I started feeling I could actually focus on my job.

So in just a few months here at Queen Anne I actually had more than a few kids come to me asking for advice on how to, you know, deal with problems with being respected or understood by adults or peers. I know there's a real need for them to feel understood or at least respected. And I think that's kind of a key thing. I mean, it's still not easy for me either. I struggle with, like, actually feeling confident and accepted on a daily basis. And a lot of people ask me questions all the time because my accent, my roots, my gender or sexuality and I think it's absolutely fine. Curiosity is absolutely fine. This is a small Scottish town, it's absolutely fine to be curious about somebody who's different, and I tell this to the kids as well, you gotta be, you gotta be patient, you just have to do a lot of work in trying to explain yourself to others. It's not fair, it may not feel fair because it's extra work you have to do, and it's already difficult for you. But unfortunately we have to and it just comes with, like, living in a community, living with other people, trying to understand each other. And if we can't at least respect each other. I think there's a difference there but it is enough to really respect another person's experience even if you can't fully understand it.