



Jigsaw, the mindful approach to PSHE, ages 3-11

How does Jigsaw approach gender identity?

This document has been written to outline Jigsaw's philosophy to value all children, and how this is reflected in its approach to gender identity, the use of language referring to boys, girls, males, females etc and our aim to provide a balanced and inclusive approach.

At Jigsaw we, of course, understand the difference between 'sex' and 'gender' and adopt the World Health Organisation distinction.

*'The World Health Organisation regional office for Europe describes **sex** as characteristics that are biologically defined, whereas **gender** is based on socially constructed features. They recognise that there are variations in how people experience **gender** based upon self-perception and expression, and how they behave.'*

Jigsaw's underpinning philosophy is to value every child as the unique human beings they are, and from this premise promotes acceptance and respect for self and others.

The relationship children have with themselves is paramount and Jigsaw focuses on developing a strong sense of identity, self-belief and self-esteem, within the whole-school PSHE programme. Jigsaw also includes all the requirements of statutory Relationships and Health Education (DfE England 2019).

The first Puzzle (unit) in Jigsaw is 'Being Me in My World' which is about discovering who I am and how I fit... in my family, my school, my friendship groups and as a global citizen.

The second Puzzle is 'Celebrating Difference' which is about identifying similarities and celebrating difference, returning to the underpinning aim of acceptance and respect for each person's uniqueness. This Puzzle also considers how sometimes difference can be a source of bullying, racism etc, children always being taught how to speak up and get help if needed.

Jigsaw works hard on ensuring age-appropriateness throughout, and we strongly encourage teachers to plan every lesson and tailor it if necessary, to ensure it meets the needs of their pupils.

The issue of gender identity is rarely treated as an explicit focus in Jigsaw 3-11 as the programme does its best to create an inclusive ethos as described above. There are opportunities for transgender to be included in classroom discussions at the teacher's discretion, but there is only one lesson (for children aged 10-11 years) where this term is used explicitly.

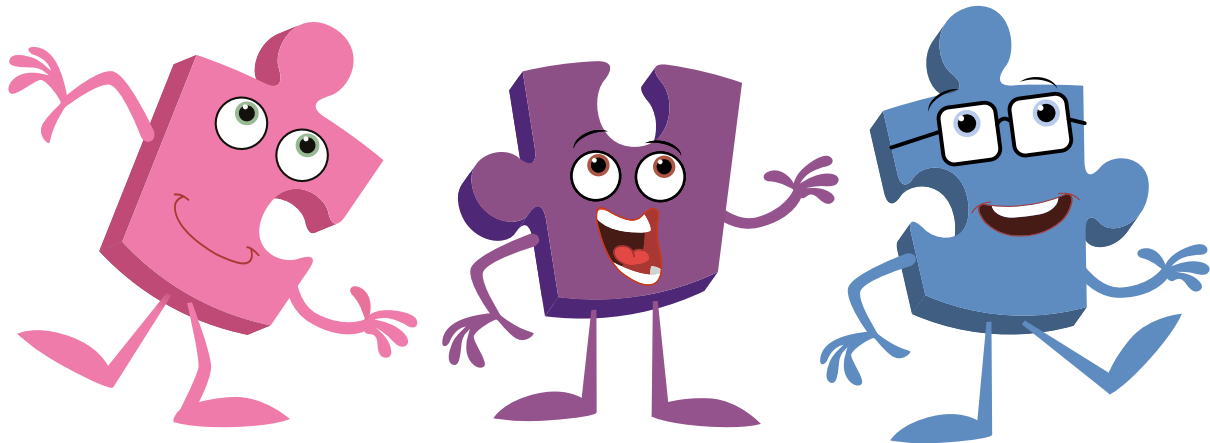
At no point does Jigsaw say there are only two genders but equally it doesn't suggest there are more; neither, in the primary programme does it refer to gender fluidity.



Jigsaw is very aware of the challenge of a binary-focused English language and does its best to use a mix of boy/girl language and gender-neutral language e.g. for names of characters in stories and scenarios etc. Jigsaw tries to reflect the diverse demographic children are a part of, always emphasising the importance of being kind, compassionate and accepting, focussing on the qualities of people as human beings, accepting children who see themselves as boys, as girls, as non-binary etc.

The Jigsaw Friends have gender- and culture-neutral names e.g. Jigsaw Jo, Jino, Jaz.

The language of 'boy' and 'girl' is used with careful attention not to stereotype.



There are explicit lessons that help children understand what stereotyping is, why it can be damaging and how to avoid doing this, always encouraging children to be who they are and celebrate their own identity and to treat others in the same way.

This means our Jigsaw approach is one we feel will fit most schools and most children, valuing children from all types of families, including those with family members who do not fit typical gender stereotypes, and those children who may struggle with their own sense of how they fit in.

When schools are aware of children who are questioning their gender, or have family members who are transgender, we know that schools want to ensure that they can acknowledge these children's experiences positively in the classroom as they do for all children in all sorts of different family compositions.

Sometimes there are children or family members who may be transgender or questioning their gender, that the school will not know about. We also know that as primary children get older, they will become increasingly aware of people and stories in the media about transgender people.

Consequently, it is important that there is some specific content built into Jigsaw that recognises transgender people as equally important members of the community and allows safe and age-appropriate discussion around the concept of transgender for primary aged children if and when it is appropriate for a class, at the teacher's discretion.

We would expect children to then feel more comfortable to take any further questions they may have home to their own families.

There are more than 250 lessons in the primary Jigsaw Programme. There is one lesson in KS1 and one in KS2 where transgender identities could be said to be explicitly reflected, although the term 'transgender' is only explicitly introduced in the materials in one lesson in Year 6 (Age 10-11 materials).

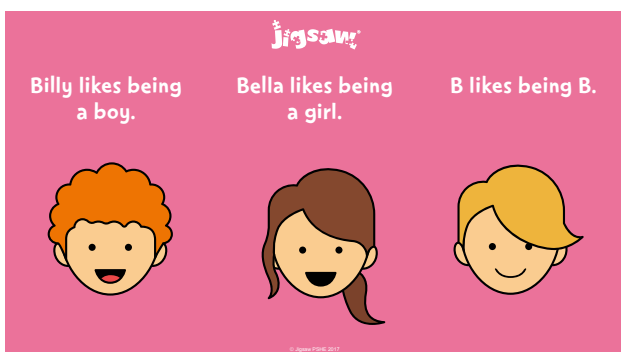
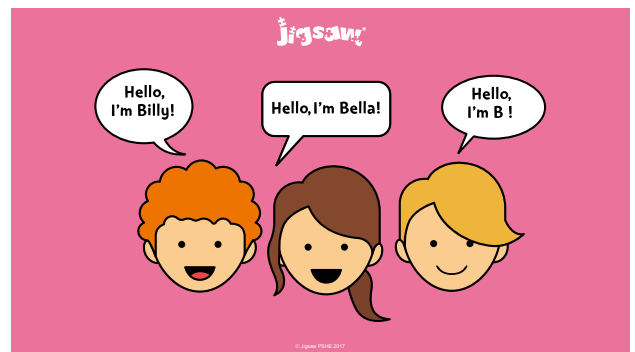


So, what is in these lessons?

Age 6-7 years, Celebrating Difference, Lesson 5, 'Gender Diversity'.

This lesson looks at whether being a boy or a girl makes a difference when choosing friends and toys. The lesson includes a character who the children do not know is a girl or a boy to help stimulate discussion about whether this makes a difference. There is no reference to LGBT+, but if a school does have a child who is questioning their gender identity, or a family member who is transgender, it may help to reflect that child's experience of the world and provide a safe classroom environment for the children to discuss any issues they have questions about. The safe learning environment is reinforced each lesson by the Jigsaw Charter established with children's ownership in the very first Jigsaw lesson.

The following 5 slides are **an excerpt** from this lesson which focuses on being kind to each other and being individuals. The main aim of the lesson is about treating everyone as individuals and that it is fine to be who you are, to have your own identity. Teachers use their discretion, knowing the children in their classes, and are encouraged to focus the lesson accordingly.



Age 10-11 years, Celebrating Difference, Lesson 2 'Understanding Difference'

This lesson for pupils aged 10-11 on the Equality Act, provides a safe learning environment for children to consider age-appropriately what transgender means. We know that most schools have had questions raised by the end of primary about what transgender means, and in Jigsaw it is introduced in this wider lesson on equality and the law.

The story of Robert/Roberta Cowell is deliberately chosen as this historic figure is removed from the fashion and media hype that influences so much current discussion around transgender. This means that it allows for a more age-appropriate discussion of the difficulties that someone who does not fit into society's stereotypes might feel, and why it is important for people to be protected by law. Its emphasis is on Roberta as a human being and her achievements as well as people's attitudes towards her at the time.

The learning activity in the lesson following the teacher input then broadens out to focus on some of the other protected characteristics in the Equality Act.

Jigsaw provides teacher notes to give ideas of how adults in the classroom could respond to questions on transgender, encouraging teachers to remember that the lesson is focussing on the importance on understanding how important it is to treat people as individuals and that for some this right is written in law, rather than focussing the lesson on the detail of what the term 'transgender' means. Schools can look at these notes and check they fit with their agreed approach to this issue in relation to the needs of the children in the class and the school community.

At no point does Jigsaw relay a 'wrong-body' narrative. Equally at no point does Jigsaw go into detail in terms of transitioning.

Jigsaw pays careful attention to the images it uses in its materials and is mindful of reflecting diversity and not promoting stereotypes, so all children can resonate with what they see.

Distancing techniques are also used in Jigsaw e.g. cartoon characters from the Planet Zarg, enabling learning messages to be free from the risk of stereotyping. This is a consistent approach from age 3 years upwards allowing all children to see themselves and their families and friends represented in our classroom resources and discussions, whatever our differences in our appearance, outlook or of course, gender identity.

Understanding puberty and human reproduction, at primary school, of course needs knowledge of both the male and female body. Jigsaw uses the words: male, female, boy, girl in such lessons and suggests teachers use terminology like 'birth-body' if they deem this is appropriate.

Jigsaw is all about preparing children for the world they live in and supporting them to be happy in their own identity and respectful of others.

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Jigsaw PSHE is pleased to work in partnership with EACH (Educational Action Challenging Homophobia) and acknowledges the national work and books of its director: Jonathan Charlesworth M.Ed. in supporting Jigsaw's philosophy to value every child.

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