

Christian Math Teacher Under Fire for Calling a Female Student ‘Girl’

A respected Christian math teacher at a school in Oxfordshire is facing discipline for “misgendering” a student.

Joshua Sutcliffe, from Oxford, began working at the school in September 2015 and currently teaches children aged 11-18. He has achieved excellent results, with his Key Stage 3 students outperforming every parallel class.

But on November 2, a complaint was made that Joshua referred to a pupil as a ‘girl’, rather than the desired ‘boy’.

Although born as a girl, the pupil had self-declared as ‘male’. Joshua had not been given any formal instruction on how to refer to the pupil. An investigation began immediately, during which Joshua was prevented from teaching and forced to spend all his time ‘in isolation’ in the staff room. He is now suspended, pending a further investigation.

‘Transgender Ideology Is Being Imposed’

Responding to the disciplinary process, Joshua commented: “I have been shocked and saddened by the actions of the school, which, in my opinion, reflect an increasing trend of seeing Christians, people like me, being marginalized in the public square, and our beliefs punished and silenced.

“While the suggestion that gender is fluid conflicts sharply with my Christian beliefs, I recognize my responsibility as a teacher and Christian to treat each of my pupils with respect and dignity.

“I have never looked to impose my convictions on others, I just try to earnestly live out the gospel of peace.

“I have balanced these factors by calling the pupil by the chosen name and although I did not intentionally refer to the pupil as a ‘girl,’ I do not believe it is unreasonable to call someone a girl if they were born a girl.

“The aggressive way in which transgender ideology is being imposed is undermining my freedom of belief and conscience, as well as the conscience of many people throughout our nation who believe that gender is assigned at birth.

“I have a deep conviction that we are all made in God’s image, male and female.”

‘A Flood of Cases’

Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, which is supporting Joshua, said:

“This case is one of a flood of cases we are encountering where teachers are finding themselves silenced or punished if they refuse to fall in line with the current transgender fad.

“We all know how much we change during our teenage years. It is vital that during those years we help our children to live in the biological sex they were born rather than encouraging them to change ‘gender.’ If we encourage them to change gender, it is not kind and compassionate; it is cruel.

“What we need is a culture in our schools [that] gives emotional support to children through puberty without encouraging them to make lifelong decisions against their natural born biological sex.

“If we collude in the transgender delusion, we do not serve our children well; we harm them.”

‘Discriminatory Behaviors’

Following the weeklong investigation, the school found that Joshua “misgendered” the pupil, “demonstrating discriminatory

behaviors” and “[contravened] the school’s equality policy.” The school recommended dealing with the matter of “misconduct” under the disciplinary policy.

Since the pupil started at the school, Joshua has tried to balance his sincerely held Christian belief that biological sex is God-given and defined at birth, with the need to treat sensitively the pupil. He avoided the use of gender-specific pronouns, and instead referred to the pupil by the pupil’s chosen name. Joshua admits saying “Well done, girls” when he addressed a group of students including the pupil in question. The pupil became irate at this and Joshua sought to defuse the situation and apologized.

Bible Club Cancelled

Whilst working at the school, Joshua also began running a successful Bible club, which was attended by over 100 pupils before being shut down by the school 18 months after its inception. He was initially told by the Headteacher that the Bible club could not run without a register and a curriculum. Yet, after producing the required documents, the Head still insisted on cancelling the club. During this time, the school’s LGBTI club, mindfulness club, and Qigong club continued running without a register or curriculum.

Following a grievance meeting initiated by a deputy headteacher, it was found that the Bible club could continue running but only when the school was satisfied that it could be run in such a way that upheld the school’s policies. Determined to comply with the conditions and have the club reinstated, Joshua made numerous attempts over the following five weeks to follow instructions to reinstate the Bible club to be run in a way which upheld the school’s policies. After ignoring the issue over this period, the Head agreed to a meeting where the issues would be discussed.

International Media Attention

Since Joshua's story hit the newspapers on Sunday, his case has been featured all over the news—on TV and radio as well as newspapers.

Along with Andrea Williams, Joshua appeared on ITV's *This Morning* and has since given interviews to numerous radio stations. Nearly all the major U.K. newspapers covered the story, including in-depth articles in the Mail on Sunday, the Mirror and the Sun. It's caught the attention of media around the world too—including the *Washington Times* and news services across Europe, Russia and China.

All of this attention has been a wonderful opportunity to share the good news about God and his plan for humanity, created male and female, in his image. {eo}

This article originally appeared on Christian Concern.