

# Challenging Gender Stereotypes.

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# Gender stereotypes definition

- ▶ A gender stereotype is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men.

# Gender Stereotypes examples

## Early Years

- ▶ Girls should play with dolls and boys should play with trucks
- ▶ Boys should be directed to like blue and green; girls toward red and pink
  - ▶ Boys should not wear dresses or other clothes typically associated with "girl's clothes"

## During Youth

- ▶ Girls are better at reading and boys are better at maths
- ▶ Girls should be thin and beautiful to make them appealing to men
  - ▶ Boys are expected to engage in sports and refrain from more creative pursuits

## Adults

- ▶ There is something wrong with a woman if she doesn't want children
- ▶ Men who are not aggressive or assertive are unmanly
- ▶ Women should take time off work to care for children and elders
- ▶ Women are nurturers and men are natural leaders

# Children's beliefs

- ▶ Pink is for girls and blue is for boys
- ▶ Football is for boys
- ▶ Man doctor
- ▶ Girls just stand around talking
- ▶ Boys are too rough
- ▶ The boys won't pass to us



# Who are these toys for? – Findings from Y6



- ▶ Majority of children said most of the toys were for boys and girls
- ▶ Majority of children said the make up was just for girls
- ▶ When given the opportunity to choose the toys they would pick, choices were stereotypical
- ▶ Many boys said they would have played with the doll when younger but not one dressed in pink
- ▶ Many children said they have made choices out of fear of what their peers might say

# Questionnaire - Findings from Y6

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Boys are better at maths than girls			
Girls are better at reading than boys			
It is okay for boys to cry			
Girls are strong			
Boys are good listeners			
Boys can be nurses			
Girls can be doctors			
It is okay for girls to cry			
It is a woman's job to do the housework			
Men are the boss of the house			
Girls can have short hair			
Boys can wear pink			

## During Youth

- ▶ Majority of children showed an equality between girls and boys through their answers for example they agreed that both girls and boys can be good at maths
- ▶ A few individuals still believed that girls could not be doctors and boys could not be nurses
- ▶ Although all of class agreed boys could wear the colour pink, many boys said pink wouldn't be the colour they choose and some said they would expect friends to comment if they were wearing pink clothes

# Why does this matter?

Gender stereotypes can limit children's choices from an early age, as seen in the careers children hope for, the school subjects they identify with and the ways in which they behave towards one another in and out of school. Gender stereotypes steer girls and boys in different directions which are reflected in later life in career choices, pay, mental health and violent behaviours

## **Aspirations, choices and careers**

Children's attitudes towards jobs are influenced by what they see around them. In young children, gender stereotyping still influences girls towards career ideas centred around nurture, and boys towards transport and sport

# Why does this matter?

## Achievement

The effect of stereotypes can also be seen in differing academic achievement in certain subjects, particularly writing and English in which, at a national level, girls consistently outperform boys .

## Subject choices:

The gendered influences to which children are exposed can be seen reflected in stark differences in the subject choices they make towards the end of secondary school

22.6%

Girls account for only 22.6% of Physics A-Levels - see chart

22.4%

Boys account for only 22.4% of English Lit A-Levels

38%

Girls account for 38% of Maths A-levels

25%

Boys take 25.5% of Psychology and 25.88% of Art and Design A-levels

# Careers

14%

The gender pay gap remains around 14% for full time workers

2x

Men are twice as likely as women to be turned down in a request for flexible working.

17%

Only 17% of ICT professionals and 12% of construction industry workers are female

11%

11% of registered nurses are male

<10%

Less than 10% of engineering professionals in the UK are female

12

There are only 12 female CEOs in the FTSE 350.

22%

Only 22% of High Court judges are women

32%

32% of MPs are women

# Mental health

Gender norms often inhibit boys and men from expressing their emotions other than through anger.

6x

Girls are 6 times more likely to be counselled by Childline about suicidal thoughts and feelings than boys...

2x

despite boys aged 15-19 being twice as likely to commit suicide

3x

The permanent exclusion rate for boys was over 3 times higher than that for girls in the year 2016-17

95%

Men accounted for 95% of the prison population in 2017

# How are we contributing to the issue?

**“At present research shows that rather than consistently challenging gender stereotypes, in some schools these are unthinkingly exacerbated.”**

Professor Becky Francis, Director, UCL Institute of Education, Drawing the Future

## **Curriculum**

Men have historically dominated many fields and this is reflected in who is taught across curriculum subjects. Even where schools do make efforts to include notable women in given fields, taken as a whole – across subjects and across year groups – men (and predominantly white men) still dominate, sending powerful messages to children.

## **Books**

A review of the top 100 children's picture books published in 2018 found a child is 1.6 times more likely to read a picture book with a male rather than a female lead, and seven times more likely to read a story that has a male villain in it than a female baddie. Male characters outnumbered female characters in more than half the books, while females outnumber males less than a fifth of the time

# How are we contributing to the issue?

## Language

Language can be a very powerful tool in challenging – or reinforcing – gender stereotypes. Whilst a zero-tolerance approach is rightly taken to racist or homophobic language in schools, what is considered ‘low level’ sexist language or ‘banter’ is often tolerated in a way that overlooks the profound effects it can have.

Language that pupils hear around school, whether it’s from teachers, other staff, visitors or their own peers, can unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes.

‘I went to the doctor’ – ‘What did he say?’

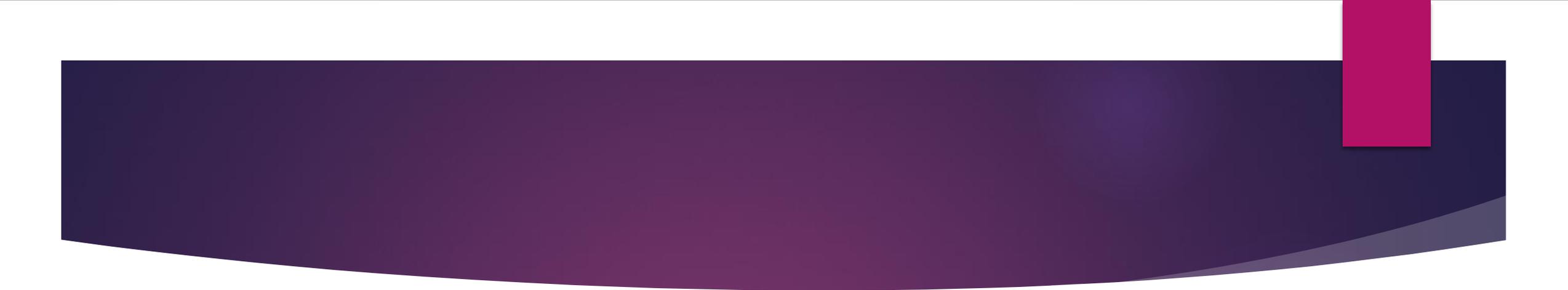
‘Make sure you ask Mum to sign the form’

‘That’s not very ladylike’

‘Typical boys’

# What can we do?

1. Create a safe space
2. Challenge stereotypes when you hear them
3. Talk about stereotypes
4. Provide a range of role models
5. Make the most of books
6. Look at who uses which spaces and equipment
7. Avoid girl jobs and boy jobs
8. Pick other ways to divide up the children
9. Use inclusive language
10. Think about rewards and sanctions



Many children can see the limiting effects of stereotypes, yet they are hard to resist when a child wants to fit in with their peers. It is not enough for children to be told they can do anything or that sexist language is wrong – crucially they also need to see those messages reflected in staff attitudes, what they learn and their experience of the school environment.

[A Class That Turned Around Kids' Assumptions of Gender Roles! - YouTube](#)