

School treats girl as boy

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METHUEN -- A fourth-grader who was attending a city school as a girl before February vacation has returned to school as a boy.

The parents of the 9-year-old say their child was born with the body of a girl, but that his real gender is male. They have asked that he be referred to and treated as a boy by teachers and other students, and school officials are accommodating the request.

The child's mother told The Eagle-Tribune newspaper that the family made the decision after consulting with medical professionals. She said the child has not undergone any medical procedure to change his sex physically.

"My child has the brain of a boy," said the mother, who asked that her family not be identified. She said that her child has never identified as a girl and at 2 years old did not want to wear girls' clothing.

The mother said that she and her husband at first thought of their child as a "tomboy." But as he kept insisting he was a boy they sought medical help. Eventually, they reached the decision to change his gender identity at school, including his first name.

School Superintendent C. Phillip Littlefield said the Comprehensive Grammar School is making "reasonable changes to accommodate the child." He said parents, some concerned, have called the school as they learned of the change.

Littlefield said the school is being "open and honest" with parents with questions.

"There is nothing harmful about this youngster being in school," he said.

The mother said that she hopes her child is accepted for who he is. "These few parents who are upset about it, I'd love to talk to them," she said. "My child is not a threat."

"I've never dealt with anything like this before," Littlefield said. "But we have unquestioned responsibility for dealing with the specific needs of this youngster."

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