

Equal Opportunities Policy

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WYCHWOOD
SCHOOL • OXFORD

Introduction

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Wychwood School, Oxford ("the School").

The School recognises the benefits of having a diverse school community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Pupils will be taught to value and respect others. The School is committed to being an equal opportunities school and employer and is committed to equal treatment for all pupils and staff, regardless of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity ("protected characteristics").

Aims

The aims of this policy and the School's ethos as a whole is to:

- Communicate the School's commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities for its pupils
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics
- Promote equal treatment for all members of the School community
- Create and maintain an open and supportive environment, free from discrimination
- Foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the School
- Comply with the School's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010
- Remove or help to overcome barriers for pupils where they already exist
- Enforce that all discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic is unacceptable and will not be tolerated

Responsibilities

All members of the School community are expected to comply with this policy and treat others with dignity at all times.

All parents/guardians are expected to support the aims of this policy and the School's ethos of tolerance and respect.

School staff, particularly those working at a management level, have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of the School with regard to equal opportunities.

Regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared to meet the School's obligations under the:

- Equality Act 2010

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This policy has regard to the following statutory guidance and advice:

- Equality Act 2010 explanatory notes
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical Guidance for Schools in England (2023)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy

Part 1 : Pupils

Admissions

The School treats every application for admission in a fair, open-minded and equal way in accordance with this policy and the School's Admissions Policy. Although an academically selective School, each application will be considered on its merits in accordance with the School's selection criteria based on an applicant's ability and aptitude. The School's aim is to encourage applications from prospective pupils with as diverse a range of background as possible. The School is committed to equal treatment for all and as such accepts applications from, and admits, all prospective pupils irrespective of their sex, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnicity, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief), social background or special educational needs ("SEN").

The School does not unlawfully discriminate in any way regarding entry. The School welcomes pupils with disabilities and/or special education needs, provided we can offer them any support that they require, cater for any additional needs and that our site can accommodate them. Parents must inform the School when submitting the Registration Form of any disabilities and/or special education needs which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and/or ability to fully participate in the education provided by the School so that we can consider what reasonable adjustments may be necessary to ensure that the child is not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other children. The School will not offer a place to a child with disabilities if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the School feels that they cannot adequately cater or meet their needs, that the prospective pupil is not going to be able to meaningfully access the education offered, or that their health and safety, or those of other pupils or staff, may be put at risk.

Bursaries are means tested awards offered to those who meet the School's admission criteria but may otherwise be unable to attend the School due to financial hardship. Details of our provision for bursaries can be found on our website or obtained from the Admissions team.

Educational services

The School affords all pupils access to educational provision including all benefits, services, and facilities, irrespective of any protected characteristic (subject to our reasonable adjustments duty and considerations of safety and welfare). The School will not discriminate against a pupil on the grounds of any protected characteristic by excluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The School will:

- Treat all members of the School community with respect and dignity and seek to provide a positive working and learning environment free from discrimination
- Endeavour to meet the needs of all pupils and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics
- Ensure that pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) and pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) receive necessary educational and welfare support
- Monitor the admission and progress of pupils from different backgrounds
- Challenge inappropriate and unacceptable discriminatory behaviour by pupils and staff
- Encourage pupils to work and play freely and have respect for all other pupils irrespective of any protected characteristic
- Offer all pupils access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of extra-curricular activities
- Work with parents and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in School
- Ensure that it reviews, monitors, and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices
- Use the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE to:
 - Promote tolerance of and respect for each other, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
 - Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
 - Encourage pupils to question and challenge assumptions and stereotypes in order to better understand discriminatory behaviours and bias.

The School recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability whether or not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms (including cyberbullying) is unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the School's *Behaviour and Discipline Policy*. The School's behaviour and anti-bullying policies make clear the seriousness of bullying, victimisation and harassment and that appropriate sanctions will be applied to any pupil who displays inappropriate behaviour.

Religious belief

Although the School's religious ethos is based on Christian values and tradition, the School is inclusive and welcomes and respects the rights and freedoms of individuals from other religions and faiths (or with no religion or faith) subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the rights and freedoms of other members of the School community.

The Board of Directors, through the Senior Management Group, actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Requests for variation in the school uniform

Pupils are required to wear a uniform until the sixth form (Study). Pupils will be given the choice of approved items of uniform (including sports kit). The Head will consider requests from parents and pupils for variations to the uniform for reasons related to disability, gender reassignment and/or on religious grounds provided they are consistent with the School's policy on health and safety and that such request/s are reasonable in all the circumstances including in light of the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn to School, parents are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Head, in advance.

Reasonable adjustments for pupils with disability

The School is committed to treating all pupils fairly and in light of the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the School will seek to ensure that pupils are not put at a substantial disadvantage, by comparison with pupils who are not disabled. As such, the School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability which includes:

1. making reasonable adjustments to our policies, criteria and practices (i.e. the way the School does things); and
2. providing auxiliary aids and services (i.e. provision of additional support or assistance).

Where the School is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, it will consult with parents and, where appropriate, the pupil, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), and (with the parents' consent) any appropriate third party, which may include for example, a medical practitioner or educational psychologist. The School will discuss what reasonable adjustments, if any, the School is able to make to avoid their child being put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other pupils. The School will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a pupil's disability and the resources available to the School. Further information on the School's reasonable adjustments duty can be found in the School's *SEND Policy*.

The School is not required to remove or alter physical features to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils or prospective pupils. Similarly, the School is not required to provide auxiliary aids for personal purposes unconnected with its provision of education and services.

The School has an *Accessibility Plan* in place which can be found on the School website and a hard copy can be made available upon request. This sets out the School's plan to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the School's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the School for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School; and improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Part 2: Recruitment and Employment of Staff

The School is an equal opportunities employer. The School is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment, including in the recruitment, training and promotion of employees and to eliminating discrimination in the workplace whether on grounds of sex, marital status, age, class, disability, gender (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, national or ethnic origins. All job applicants and employees are treated equally. The School is committed to ensuring that there is equality of opportunities for career development and training across the whole staff team, both teaching and support.

Aims

1. The School aims to ensure that their staff achieve their full potential and that all employment decisions are taken without reference to irrelevant or discriminatory criteria. This Equal Opportunities Policy has been adopted as a means of helping to achieve these aims.
2. It is the School's policy to give full and fair consideration to applications for employment from disabled persons and to provide appropriate training, development and promotion prospects, equivalent to those available to other employees.
3. All members of the school community have a responsibility to ensure that this Policy is properly observed and fully complied with. Any act of discrimination or harassment/sexual harassment is viewed very seriously by the School. Anyone who believes that he or she may have been disadvantaged on discriminatory grounds is entitled to raise the matter through the appropriate channels.

Implementation of equality of opportunity

1. Recruitment and employment decisions will be made on the basis of fair and objective criteria. The School will endeavour to ensure that job vacancies are widely advertised/publicised so that the widest range of candidates can apply.
2. The School's selection procedures will be reviewed from time to time to ensure they are appropriate for achieving the School's objectives and for avoiding unlawful discrimination.
3. In order to ensure the effectiveness of this Equal Opportunities Policy, the School monitors the composition of its workforce, applicants for promotion or job applicants. Information given as part of its monitoring policy is treated in the strictest confidence. It is used solely for monitoring purposes. The result of its monitoring will be reviewed as appropriate.
4. Appropriate training may be provided to enable staff to implement and uphold the School's commitment to equality of opportunity.
5. The School shall ensure that INSET is made available to all staff.

6. Equal consideration will be given to staff career development regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender, (except in the Boarding Houses), gender reassignment race, creed, nationality, colour, disability, pregnancy or maternity, marital status including civil partnership, or class.

Monitoring and review

The Head regularly monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy and reports to the Board annually on the policy's effectiveness in practice.

Breaches of this policy

Pupils who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's Behaviour and Discipline Policy.

If you believe that a pupil has received less favourable treatment as a result of a protected characteristic, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to a pupil's detriment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the School's complaints procedure available from the School's website or from the School office.