



HEATHFIELD SCHOOL

Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy Area:	General
Relevant Statutory Regulations:	NMS 16 Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 Race Relations Act 1976 Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 Sex Discrimination Act 1986 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 Gender Recognition Act 2004
Key Contact Personnel in School	
Nominated Member of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy:	Bursar
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This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and/or following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures.

Introduction

The promotion of equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Heathfield School. This commitment is shared by all who work at Heathfield School ("the School"). Heathfield School prides itself on providing a tolerant and mutually respectful environment in which the wishes of students and staff are considered in conjunction with the wellbeing of the whole community.

The School is an equal opportunities employer and values diversity in the School community and workplace. The School is committed to ensuring that its students and staff study and work in an environment that respects and values difference and diversity. Discrimination, bullying and harassment are not tolerated in the School and will be addressed under the appropriate policy as a serious matter.

Applicable to

This Policy applies to: employees; job applicants; individuals such as agency staff, contractors and volunteers who are not employees but who work at the School; and to students. It does not form part of employees' contracts of employment and may be amended by the School from time to time.

Approach

No person will receive unfair or unlawful treatment on the grounds of a Protected Characteristic, or because they are perceived to have a Protected Characteristic, or because they are associated with someone with a Protected Characteristic. Protected Characteristics are defined in the Equality Act 2010, and listed below:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Gender
- Sexual orientation

Definitions

Discrimination: Discrimination may occur deliberately or by accident. Direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment are covered by this policy and are defined as follows:

Direct Discrimination: treating somebody less favourably because of a protected characteristic; their association with somebody who has a protected characteristic eg a parent with a disabled child; or the perception that somebody has a protected characteristic. This provides the most clear-cut and obvious examples of discrimination-for example if the school were to refuse to let a pupil be a prefect because she was gay.

Indirect discrimination: applying a criteria, provision or practice which places a group of people at a disadvantage because of a protected characteristic which cannot be objectively justified. An example might be to put a Parents' Evening on a Friday night which would mean that Jewish parents could not attend.

Harassment: any unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It can be persistent or isolated and includes behaviour which induces anger, stress, anxiety, fear or sickness on the part of the person being harassed. It can be physical, verbal, direct or indirect and can include gestures, intimidation, unwelcome remarks, suggestions, propositions, malicious gossip, jokes and 'banter'. In addition, non-verbal harassment can include offensive literature, pictures, graffiti, isolation, non-cooperation or unwelcome physical conduct. The School will not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying: such behaviour is totally unacceptable and the School looks to support any employee or student who is suffering from harassment. The School strives to provide a neutral working environment in which no-one feels threatened or intimidated.

Victimisation: treating one person less favourably than another on the grounds that they have brought discrimination proceedings, given evidence or information regarding discrimination proceedings or alleged discrimination or because they intend to do any of these acts.

Refer to Appendix A for examples of unacceptable behavior.

Aims of the Policy

The policy exists in order to ensure that all the provisions of relevant equality laws, and the recommendations of associated codes of practice, are fully observed throughout all areas of Heathfield School.

The School's duties under the Equality Act 2010 include dealing with issues related to students with special educational needs/disabilities, and making reasonable adjustments for these students.

The School aims to create a learning environment free from all forms of discrimination, victimisation or harassment.

The School's key objective is for students and staff to be full participants in the School community.

The School's aims and objectives reflect the requirements of its duties and to have due regard to the following:

- to continually aim to improve the inclusivity of the curriculum;
- promote equality of opportunity between people with disabilities and people with no disabilities;
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act;
- eliminate harassment of people with disabilities that is related to their impairment;
- promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities;
- encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life;
- to support the ethos of the School as a community which respects the rights of disabled students to have equal access to the curriculum, extra-curricular and other services;
- to equally value and encourage all students;
- to foster positive attitudes towards disability within our community;
- to take steps to meet the needs of people with disabilities, including making reasonable adjustment.

Staff Recruitment and Training

The School is committed to providing equal opportunities throughout employment, including in the recruitment, training and promotion of employees, and to eliminating discrimination in the workplace whether on the grounds of a Protected Characteristic.

The School is committed to ensuring that the best possible staff are recruited on the basis of their merits, abilities and suitability for the position. The School has a comprehensive Recruitment Policy which details the recruitment process and covers equality and diversity issues. All job applicants and employees will be treated with respect, and diversity is valued. It is the School's policy to give full and fair consideration to all applications for employment and to provide appropriate training, development and promotion prospects to all staff.

Newly created posts may be advertised internally initially, externally or both depending on the requirements of the role. External posts will be advertised in the national press, and/or in local press, and/or in specialist journals as appropriate to the position in question. The School aims in doing this it will encourage suitable applicants from a broad range of backgrounds.

The School is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in respect of all areas including the following:

- Career development
- Opportunities for training
- Appointments and allocation of responsibilities for all employees
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Termination of employment including redundancies
- Conduct at work
- Respectful and non-discriminatory behaviour by all staff.

The School aims to ensure that staff achieve their full potential and that all employment decisions are taken without reference to irrelevant or discriminatory criteria. The School also aims to encourage good practice in the field of equality of opportunity for students so that all students at the School are able to develop fully as individuals. This Equal Opportunities Policy has been adopted as a means of helping to achieve these aims.

Staff at Heathfield are expected to set an example and promote equality of opportunity for all students and staff, both current and prospective, and to support an environment that values diversity.

Responsibility

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and ensure that students do likewise.

The **Governors, Headmistress** and **Senior Leadership Team** have a particular responsibility to lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to this policy.

Employees have a responsibility to ensure that the School's Equal Opportunities Policy is properly observed and fully complied with. Breaches of the Equal Opportunities Policy, and any act of discrimination, bullying, victimisation or harassment by an employee, are viewed very seriously by the School and, in appropriate cases, will result in disciplinary action, up to and including the employee's summary dismissal without notice. Employees should be aware that they can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the Governors for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may also be guilty of a criminal offence.

The responsibility of the **Teacher**:

- The class teacher ensures that all students are treated fairly, equally and with respect. We do not discriminate against any child.
- When selecting classroom material, the class teacher should pay due regard to the sensitivities of all members of the class and do not provide material that is racist or sexist in nature.
- Teachers strive to provide material that gives positive images and that challenges stereotypical images of minority groups.

The School will fulfil this Equal Opportunities Policy by ensuring that:

- the education provided by the School promotes positive social attitudes and respect for all;
- all members of the School community are treated fairly and with equality;
- all staff set an example to students to encourage them to be aware of equal opportunities and respect for others;
- it respects the cultural and ethnic diversity of students, parents and guardians and staff, recognising that this enriches the environment of the School;

- it recognises and value different religious belief systems;
- if a student's religion affects the wearing of the School uniform, the School will deal with each case on an individual basis and with respect for the student's cultural traditions;
- students for whom English is a second language and students with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, receive appropriate support;
- all students have access to the full range of the curriculum and opportunities offered by the School.

Addressing concerns

Staff: An individual or group who has been subjected to any form of discrimination may wish to try and resolve the problem informally before or instead of invoking the formal procedure. Where practical, this approach is often very effective and it is recommended as the first step in resolving the problem. If such an approach is impractical or unsuccessful the incident should be discussed with the appropriate line manager or, if that is not appropriate, a member of the Senior Leadership Team. All issues relating to discrimination, harassment and bullying are taken extremely seriously in the School and complaints will be investigated in line with the Grievance Procedure for staff. Where appropriate the Disciplinary Procedure will be applied.

Students and Parents: Students should report any concerns about equality issues to a member of staff. Complaints against other students will be investigated and addressed in accordance with the Behaviour policy. Discrimination, bullying and harassment of any kind are not tolerated in the School.

Complaints about the admissions process should be raised in accordance with the Admissions policy.

Parents of girls currently at the school may raise complaints formally with the School through the Complaints policy.

Student Admissions

Equality in education does not refer to all students reaching the same level of achievement, but to the removal of barriers to educational success and the broadening of opportunities for all students to reach their individual potential. The School welcomes applications from candidates regardless of their background. The School is committed to ensuring that its admissions process is conducted in a way which is transparent and fair. It is the aim of the School to identify and admit students of academic potential regardless of their current educational setting and family circumstances.

In this spirit, the School is committed to equal treatment for all and undertakes to comply with legislation governing equal opportunities. In addition, the School is committed to promoting understanding of the principles of equality and fairness.

The School will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of their racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, body image, background or, where practicable, disabilities.

A well-developed bursary programme enables as many as possible who meet the School's admission criteria to attend the School regardless of their family's financial circumstances.

The School also welcomes applications from students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although there are currently limited facilities for the disabled the School will accommodate the requirements of candidates who have special educational needs and/or disabilities for which, with reasonable adjustments, the School can cater adequately.

The School often accepts students whose first language is not English, but in order to access the curriculum and benefit from the wide range of opportunities offered at the School, students need to be

fluent in English. For this reason, the School's entrance process assumes that candidates are able readers, speakers and writers of English.

This diversity enriches the School community and is vital in preparing our students for today's world. The School concentrates on educating the individual, to provide a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish. The School's fundamental objective is to nurture the identity of all students.

Developing Understanding

Assemblies, PSHE, curriculum lessons especially RS, Drama and English and clubs and societies are all used to:

- Ensure a clear understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the law of the land, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance.
- Promote tolerance of each other and respect for others.
- Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
- Foster an open-minded approach and encourage students to recognise the contributions made by different cultures.
- Understand why and how the School will deal with offensive language and behaviour.
- Understand why and how the School will deal with any incidents promptly and in a sensitive manner.

Discriminatory harassment in all its forms is unlawful and unacceptable; the School's policies contain clear procedures for dealing with unlawful discrimination.

Staff receive information about the Equality Act 2010 as part of their induction. Training is available for staff on SEND and equality issues in education from time to time. Procedures ensure fair and equitable treatment in relation to the assessment and other treatment of students.

Culture and Race

Heathfield is proud of the fact that students and staff come from diverse backgrounds; the School endeavours to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect in order to help to promote a school and a society in which there is social, religious and racial harmony:

The School will:

- take positive action to enable every individual to raise his/her self-esteem, expectations and achievement.
- consider relaxing its usual rules on dress to allow special forms of dress where these are an essential part of a religious or cultural background.
- value the contribution of our multicultural community and seek to express this in the life of the School.
- seek to counter negative, patronising and stereotyped views.
- not tolerate racist behaviour.

Transgender

Heathfield School is a girls' school. As such, the School will consider at the admissions stage, in adherence to its Articles of Association and charitable objects, only those prospective students who are legally defined as female.

Religion

The School acknowledges that members of Heathfield come from diverse backgrounds: some have no religious faith; others are committed to a greater or lesser extent to a variety of religions. The School seeks to promote an ethos of tolerance based on understanding of, and respect for, the beliefs and practices of others. The Chaplain gives active support to all faith groups within the School.

With regard to the teaching of Religious Education the School considers that the role of the teacher is that of educator and not that of evangelist. The School does not seek to make students religious, but to teach them about religion.

Resources

All materials published by and in use in Heathfield will be monitored for discriminatory content by the marketing department.

Disability Discrimination

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Mental impairment includes those with learning difficulties and mental illness – providing that the illness is clinically well recognised - and "long term" means at least one year).

The School is committed to facilitating the employment of people with disabilities wherever practical.

Members of staff are encouraged to notify the Deputy Bursar if they have ongoing health issues which are causing difficulties at work or which are of concern generally. The School is often able to provide assistance by considering reasonable adjustments to the workplace or duties. These are often simple to put in place but can make a significant difference.

Action to be taken

Any and all acts of discrimination, whether they appear serious or not, must be responded to straight away. Failure to challenge any form of prejudice, especially on the part of adults, can be viewed by the students as condoning it. It is the responsibility of the individual who hears or witnesses an expression of a discriminatory nature to judge the impact and seriousness of the incident.

Action to be taken:

- Challenge those involved unless a member of staff is either the victim or the perpetrator. In this case the matter must be reported directly to the Director of Pastoral and Boarding.
- All students in the School have a responsibility to act and to report.
- If in doubt talk to a member of staff or a prefect.
- What you must not do is do nothing.
- If distress caused is evident, the incident must be reported to a member of staff who will record the event and pass this on to the Director of Pastoral and Boarding.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

Heathfield monitors its Equal Opportunity Policy on a regular basis and at least annually.

Student admissions, staff 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 normally widely

advertised and/or publicised so that the broadest range of candidates can apply. 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.

The School retains equality data covering age, nationality and gender for its staff and anonymised data including ethnicity for job applicants. In order to ensure the effectiveness of its Equal Opportunities Policy, the School monitors the composition of its workforce and student body from time to time. Information given by parents, staff and job applicants is treated in the strictest confidence, and is used solely for monitoring purposes.

Equal consideration will be given to staff career development and other employment matters irrespective of gender, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partner status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origins, maternity or pregnancy and religion or belief.

Related Policies

- Accessibility Policy
- Admissions policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Code of Conduct for Teachers and Support Staff
- Complaints policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Disability policy
- Disciplinary policy and procedure
- Educational Visits Policy
- First Aid and Medical Care Policy
- Grievance policy and procedure
- Health and Safety policy
- ICT acceptable use policy
- Overseas Student Admissions and EFL-EAL Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- PSHE Policy
- Recruitment policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy
- SEND policy
- Spectrum Laptop Computer and Word Processor Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Transgender Policy
- Whistleblowing policy

Appendix A - Unacceptable Behaviour

In all areas described below it is possible for discrimination to be direct, indirect, or to take the form of harassment, bullying or victimisation, including third party harassment and which may also include the use of electronic technology.

The following examples would constitute unacceptable behaviour – the list is not exhaustive:

- i. Physical assault against a person or group because of a protected characteristic (under the Equality Act 2010);
- ii. Verbal abuse, derogatory name-calling, insults, threats and jokes any of which may be based on a protected characteristic;
- iii. Graffiti relating to a protected characteristic;
- iv. Issuing/wearing materials relating to a protected characteristic, eg leaflets, magazines, insignia;
- v. Inciting others to behave in inappropriately towards others on the basis of a protected characteristic;
- vi. Making derogatory or stereotypical remarks, comments or suggestions about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender in the course of discussions or lessons;
- vii. Refusing to co-operate with others because of a protected characteristic;
- viii. The use of electronic technology to further any of the above abuses.

Race

The School regards racism as any attitude held by a person or group of one ethnic origin towards an individual or group of different ethnic origin which is offensive, discriminatory or hostile towards the individual or group.

The School also considers racism to be behaviour, acts or expressions that reflect such attitudes, or any incitement to behaviour of that kind.

Gender

The School considers sexism to be any attitude held by a person or group of one sex towards an individual or group of the other sex which is offensive, discriminatory or hostile towards the individual or group.

The School considers sexual harassment to be behaviour, acts or expressions that reflect such attitudes, or an incitement to behaviour of that kind.

Sexual Orientation

The School considers it unacceptable to hold or express any attitude towards an individual which is offensive, discriminatory or hostile on the basis of that individual's or group's orientation towards persons of the same sex or opposite sex (namely homosexuals, heterosexuals and bisexuals).

It is also unacceptable to discriminate on the grounds of perceived sexual orientation (that is, assuming – correctly or incorrectly – that someone is homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual), and association (that is, being discriminated against on the grounds of the sexual orientation of those with whom you associate).

Religion or Belief

The School considers it unacceptable to hold or express any attitude towards an individual which is offensive, discriminatory or hostile on the basis of that individual's or group's religious belief or similar

philosophical belief.

It is also unacceptable to discriminate on the grounds of perceived as well as actual religion or belief.

Further, it is unacceptable to discriminate against individuals or groups on the grounds of the religion or belief of those with whom an employee associates.

Age

The School considers it unacceptable to hold or express any attitude towards an individual which is offensive, discriminatory or hostile on the basis of that individual's age.

It is also unacceptable to discriminate on the grounds of perceived as well as actual age.