



Equal Opportunities Policy for Pupils

Author: Headmaster

Updated: November 2024

Next Review: November 2027 (or earlier if legislation or other factors require)

This policy applies to all pupils in the school, including the EYFS

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos and values of The Pilgrims' School ("the School").

The School recognises the benefits of having a diverse School Community, with individuals who value both one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Pupils are consistently taught to value and respect others. The School values of Heart, Integrity and Respect all fundamentally align with this approach. The School is committed to being an equal opportunities school and is committed to equal treatment for all pupils, regardless of race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment ("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 respect 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

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

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

Staff at the School, 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 values 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
- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2024
- 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 (most recently issued)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy
- Bullying Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Equal Opportunities for Staff Policy

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 backgrounds as possible. The School is committed to equal treatment for all and as such accepts applications from, and admits, prospective pupils irrespective of their disability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, 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 Director of Finance & Resources' office.

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 and pupils with an Education Health Care Plan 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, Discipline and Exclusions Policy and its Bullying Policy. These 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 foundation and religious ethos is based on Christian values and tradition, we are an inclusive organisation and welcome and respect 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 governing body, through the senior leadership team, 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

All pupils are required to wear a uniform. The Headmaster will consider requests from parents and pupils for variations to the uniform for reasons related to disability 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.

[The School's policy on transgender pupils is available [\[where?\]](#).]

Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn to School, parents are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Headmaster, 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 making such adjustments to our policies, criteria and practices.

Where the School is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, it will consult with parents and, where appropriate, the pupil, the Head of Learning Support, 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, it 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.

Monitoring and review

The Headmaster monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy and reports to the governors 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 Policy, Discipline and Exclusions 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 via the School's website or available in hard copy upon request).

Gender reassignment and sex – the law

The Equality Act 2010 requires that our admissions and our provision of education, benefits, facilities and other services do not unlawfully discriminate (either directly or indirectly via policies, applied criteria or practices), harass or victimise pupils on the basis of a protected characteristic.¹ There are nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, including gender reassignment and sex.

The protected characteristic of sex is not fully defined under the Equality Act 2010. A pupil's legal sex (when they are under 18) is likely to be considered to be their natal sex (i.e. that which they were assigned at birth, as generally determined by observations at birth), although there are different legal opinions on this issue.

Section 7 of the Equality Act 2010 confirms that a person will have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if that person is "proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex." Given the age range of the School, this is considered to be a highly unlikely position for a pupil to be in. Were it to be so, and recognising that this is a regularly evolving area, legal advice would be sought by the School in order to ensure we were fulfilling our duties in a caring and appropriate manner, keeping the needs of the pupil foremost.

Gender reassignment and sex – admissions

The School is a single sex school and the Equality Act 2010 envisages that single sex schools may refuse admission to pupils of the opposite sex (but permits their admission, where such admission is exceptional or their numbers are comparatively small and their admission is confined to particular courses or classes, without jeopardising the School's single sex status). As the School operates as a boys' school, it will only consider those who are legally defined as male at admission stage.