



Equal Opportunities Policy (Pupils)

Whole School & EYFS

New Policy: March 2024 (CW)

Governor Review: March 2024

Introduction

Education has an important role to play in positively influencing the attitudes, expectations, aspirations and achievements of individuals within school and as members of a wider community. AESG prides itself on providing a tolerant and mutually respectful environment in which the wishes of pupils and staff are considered in conjunction with the wellbeing of the whole community.

The school is committed to a policy of inclusion that sees the diverse population of its staff, pupils and governors as one of its strengths. In order to ensure that everyone can thrive and meet their full potential, it is essential that inclusion and equality of opportunity be at the heart of the School's ethos.

This policy applies equally to staff, pupils, parents and visitors to the School. It aims to ensure that no-one is treated less favourably on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, pregnancy, maternity, religion or belief. The School adopts a zero-tolerance policy in relation to discrimination on the basis of any protected characteristic.

Any behaviour, comments or attitudes (including "banter") that undermine or threaten an individual's self-esteem on these grounds will not be tolerated. We aim to provide equal access to high quality educational opportunities and to ensure that everyone feels they are a valued member of the school community. We seek to provide a safe and happy environment where all can flourish and where cultural diversity is celebrated. We aim to empower our pupils to make informed choices so that they are better prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life within their community.

Responsibility

Alderley Edge School for Girls aims to:

- provide a secure environment in which all our pupils can thrive and achieve all of the outcomes of Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- provide a learning environment where all individuals see themselves reflected and feel a sense of belonging.
- prepare pupils for life in a diverse and inclusive society in which everyone can take their place in the local, regional, national and international community.
- include and value the contribution of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity.
- provide and promote positive non-stereotyping information about the diversity of our society.

- actively challenge discrimination and disadvantage and ensure we learn from these experiences.
- embed inclusion through all our activities.

To achieve these aims we will:

- involve members of the AESG community in the development, review, evaluation, and impact assessment of all relevant improvement plans, policies and procedures.
- publish and share our policies and progress with the whole community.
- collect and analyse data to monitor potential disadvantage.
- provide for pupils' diverse needs to overcome any potential barriers to learning.
- make provision in the wider school curriculum to promote and celebrate diversity.
- operate a clear zero tolerance policy towards abusive or discriminatory behaviour.
- work in partnership with families and the wider community to establish, promote and disseminate inclusive practice and tackle discrimination.

Inclusion cannot be realised without the involvement and commitment of all members of the school community.

The Governors and Senior Leadership Team have responsibility for ensuring that the School operates within the legal framework for equality and for implementing the policy throughout the School. However, each member of the School community is responsible for preventing discrimination, embracing diversity and upholding equality of opportunity.

It is the School Governors' responsibility to:

- positively role model inclusive behaviour and practice.
- ensure that the school complies with equality legislation.
- ensure that the school's policy and procedures are monitored for effectiveness.
- be involved in dealing with serious breaches of the policy.

It is the Headmistress' responsibility to:

- ensure implementation of this policy and its procedures.
- ensure that all staff are sufficiently aware and trained within Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- actively challenge and take appropriate action in any cases of discriminatory practice.
- have procedures in place to deal effectively with any reported incidents of discrimination, victimization or harassment.
- ensure that all visitors and contractors are aware of, and comply with this policy.

It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- positively role-model inclusive behaviour and practice.
- actively challenge any forms of discrimination, victimization, harassment or bullying, including banter.
- promote an inclusive curriculum, identify and challenge bias and stereotyping within the curriculum and in the school's culture.
- commit to broadening their knowledge, confidence and inclusive behaviour by attending relevant training and accessing information from appropriate sources
- support school initiatives such as the Student Committees to promote equal opportunities within and beyond the school community

The Legal Framework

The legal and local framework for this policy is:

- Equality Act 2010
- DfE Guidance on Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 2004
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Duty to Promote Community Cohesion, Education and Inspections Act 2006

There are nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 which apply to the provision of education in schools:

- Age (for employees only)
- Sex
- Marriage or civil partnership (for employees only)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (Includes ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality)
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

Discrimination can take the following forms:

- **Direct Discrimination** - This occurs where a person is treated less favourably than others because of their (or a family members) actual or perceived protected characteristic.
- **Indirect Discrimination** - This occurs by applying a provision, criterion or practice which disadvantages people on the grounds of a protected characteristic and which cannot be justified as a proportionate or unpreventable way of achieving a legitimate aim.
- **Victimisation** - This occurs where an individual has exercised their rights under equality legislation (or has indicated that they intend to do so) and is treated less favourably as a direct result. It applies equally to a person who is supporting (or indicates that they intend to support) another person who is exercising their rights under the legislation.
- **Discrimination by association** – This occurs if people in your life, like family members, have protected characteristics and you are treated unfairly because of that.
- **Harassment** – This is defined as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose OR effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating a hostile, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Implementation

The implementation of this policy and embedding Inclusion into AESG's culture is led by the Headmistress.

Key components of implementation include:

Training and Development

The success of the Equal Opportunities Policy is closely linked to the provision of relevant training. The school will endeavour to:

- enhance and develop the skills, knowledge and abilities of existing employees to realise their full potential, irrespective of background or employment status
- provide equal access to training and development opportunities for all staff, including part time, on the basis of their assessed training needs
- promote greater awareness of equal opportunities and the contribution which staff, governors, parents and pupils can make
- equip employees with the skills to provide personal and organisational solutions to discriminatory practices and behaviour and to promote inclusive behaviour generally.

Professional development involves a continuous process of learning involving self development, encouragement and motivation.

Inclusion within the Academic life of the School

No pupil should be made to feel uncomfortable because they differ from the majority, e.g. in ethnic or social background, in being gifted, being from financial disadvantage, having English as an additional language or a special educational need and/or disability.

Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities will be given assistance to achieve their potential by differentiation of tasks and additional support where appropriate.

Curriculum

Where possible, relevant aspects of the curriculum will aim to:

- Normalise diversity in the content and examples utilised.
- Stress the contribution of all kinds of individuals and cultures.
- Reinforce the importance of embracing difference, and of equality of opportunity as a desirable aim.

Resources will be monitored for possible bias, reinforcing stereotypes and/or ethnocentric elements.

Displays/Public Events

This policy will be kept in mind when deciding on pupils chosen to represent the school for public events, or to supply work for display.

Pastoral Care - Form Tutors and Heads of Year

The following areas will be monitored by those responsible:

- Friendship groups - no individual or group should be isolated as belonging to a minority. We use Girls on Board to mediate and support individuals.
- Rewards and sanctions - should be applied with consistency and impartiality
- Co-curricular involvements - all pupils have access to a range of involvements
- Positions of responsibility - should be awarded to those best qualified, on the grounds of personal qualities only. The Head Girl Team will be appointed following a democratic process in which the views of the members of the Senior School and staff are consulted

Links with the wider community

All visitors to the school whether in a teaching function or as visitors/casual users of school premises will be expected to act in accordance with the principles of equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion.

All members of the school community will be expected to act in accordance with the principles of this policy when in contact with others, outside the school, e.g.

- Students on work experience, at competitions or on visits
- Contractors within the school
- Staff dealing with visitors or at conferences

Students may need support to cope with bias encountered in the wider society; coping strategies will be discussed in PSHE and other lessons as appropriate.

Infringements - Procedures Students

- Minor incidents should be dealt with immediately and informally, where possible taking the opportunity for a teaching or tutorial discussion.
- More serious or consistent problems should be reported to the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

Staff

Any staff infringing the guidelines of this policy should be reported to the Headmistress.

Visitors and Parents

Any visitors or parents infringing the guidelines of this policy should be reported to the Headmistress.

Monitoring

In order to identify where bias may be playing a role in decisions or outcomes, a number of areas will be routinely monitored. These include:

- Admissions data
- Bursary applications
- Anonymised staff recruitment data
- Examination results
- Destinations after 16+ and 18+

This will be done within the GDPR and confidentiality of personal information protocols and will be reported in such a way that does not identify any individuals.

Staff Recruitment

Whilst different terms and conditions and processes may apply for different groups of staff based on the requirements of the roles or statutory definitions, the School undertakes to ensure that employees and prospective employees are not discriminated against, in particular in relation, but not limited to:

- Recruitment and selection
- Promotion, transfer & training opportunities
- Benefits, terms and conditions of employment
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures

- Termination of employment including redundancies
- Conduct at work

We regularly review our policies and procedures taking the current requirements of equality legislation into account.

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 Staff Safer Recruitment and policy which details the recruitment process and covers equality and diversity issues.

Disability Discrimination

A disability is defined as any medical condition which has a substantial and long-term effect on a person's ability to do normal day to day activities. Some conditions are covered as soon as they are diagnosed.

Members of staff are encouraged to notify the Headmistress or 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.

Addressing Concerns

Any concerns about equality related issues should be reported to 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.

Related School documents

School policies and handbooks will take note of the relevant aspects of Equal Opportunities. Those with particular relevance are:

- Accessibility Plan
- Admissions' Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Complaints' Procedure
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- SEND Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Staff Code of Conduct