

Equal Opportunities Policy

2023 -2024

St Albans Independent College

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Statement of intent

St Albans Independent College understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, all Colleges have a duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality between different groups;
- Foster good relations between different groups; and
- Promote mental health and wellbeing.

Our College's overall values are underpinned by our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. We are dedicated to ensuring that every pupil receives an education that offers them the best chance at fulfilling their potential, and to promoting mental wellbeing amongst our pupils. We have developed this policy to provide a clear framework for how we will achieve our College's aims.

Our College's aim is to provide an environment conducive to promoting equality.

To achieve our aims, we will adopt the following methods:

- Embedding equality within teaching and resources
- Using key indicators to understand the needs and characteristics of our College
- Promoting community cohesion
- Promoting parental engagement
- Investing in regular staff training
- Using key information, such as measures of wellbeing, to monitor the progress of pupils with protected characteristics
- Regularly reviewing our equality policy to ensure it reflects current trends and issues

1. Legal framework
 - 1.1. This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - The Equality Act 2010
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - 1.2. This policy has due regard to statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act and schools'
 - DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children'
 - DfE (2018) 'Gender Separation in mixed schools'
 - DfE (2014) 'Equality Act 2010: advice for schools'
 - DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'
 - 1.3. This policy is related to the following other College policies:
 - LAC Policy
 - SEND Policy
 - Curriculum Policy
 - Anti-bullying Policy
 - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
 - Behavioural Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Supporting Pregnant Pupils and School-Age Parents Policy
 - Complaints Procedures Policy
2. Roles and responsibilities
 - 2.1. The Principal will:
 - Be responsible for ensuring the College complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations.
 - Take all reasonable steps to ensure pupils and potential pupils will not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised in relation to:
 - Admissions.
 - The way the College provides and education for pupils.
 - How pupils are provided with access to benefits, facilities and services.
 - The exclusion of a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

- Ensure all policies are developed and implemented with appropriate equality impact assessments informing future plans in collaboration with the Principal.

2.2. The Principal will:

- Implement this policy, ensuring that all staff and pupils apply its guidelines fairly in all situations.
- Conduct briefing sessions to ensure all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities, as well as to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Review and amend this policy, taking into account new legislation and government guidance, and previously reported incidents, in order to improve procedures.
- Ensure that appropriate counselling is made available for pupils who require immediate interventions, parental assistance and personal counselling.

2.3. Staff will:

- Be alert to the possible harassment of pupils, both inside and outside of the College, and to deal with incidents of harassment/discrimination as the highest priority.
- Carry out their statutory duties relating to equal opportunities, inclusivity and pertaining to their specific roles.
- Have due regard to the sensitivities of all pupils, and not provide material that may cause offence.

3. Data protection

3.1. The College will adopt secure controls on sensitive personal data, ensuring all data is accurate, secure and processed fairly and lawfully.

3.2. The College will gain consent from pupils and parents before any sensitive personal data is processed.

3.3. The College will respect all pupils' right to privacy and will not disclose a pupil's trans * status or sexual orientation to any other pupils, staff members or third parties.

3.4. The College holds a Data Protection Policy containing further information addressing data protection.

4. Protected characteristics

4.1. We will not discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of their:

- Sex.
- Race.
- Disability, which includes mental health, encompassing prejudiced assumptions, attitudes or behaviours related to mental health.
- Religion or belief.
- Sexual orientation.

- Gender reassignment.
- Pregnancy or maternity.

4.2. We will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic related to a person, such as a parent, with whom the pupil or prospective pupil is associated.

4.3. We will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic which they are believed to have, even if the belief is mistaken.

4.4. We will regularly review our College practices to ensure that they are fair with regard to all the protected characteristics listed in 4.1.

5. Sex

5.1. For the purpose of this policy, sex refers to their biological assignment at birth depending on their reproductive organs. We understand some pupils may wish to identify with another gender, and we will support pupils through their transitioning phases.

5.2. We will ensure that pupils of one sex are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to pupils of other sexes. – to achieve this,

5.3. There may be occasions where we deem it necessary to teach some subjects in single-sex classes, such as RSE, but we will ensure that such classes do not give pupils an unfair disadvantage when compared to pupils of the other sex in other classes.

5.4. The College will only separate pupils by sex where there is reasonable justification or if one of the following applies:

- Girls or boys will suffer a disadvantage connected to their sex
- Girls or boys have needs that are different from the needs of the other sex
- Participation in an activity by girls or boys is disproportionately low

5.5. The College will consider non-statutory exceptions on a case-by-case basis, and regularly review the impact of any separation to ascertain whether it remains lawful.

5.6. Boys and girls will be offered an equal opportunity to undertake any activity in the College, e.g. in relation to technology lessons all pupils will be allowed to choose which skills they learn.

5.7. Occasions where boys and girls are separated to be taught in single-sex classes will be documented and the separation justified to ensure parents, Ofsted and, where necessary, the wider community can understand the reasons behind segregation.

5.8. Where a subject is taught in a single-sex class, pupils undergoing gender reassignment will be allowed to attend the single-sex class that corresponds with the gender they identify with.

5.9. Pupils' age and stage of development will be taken into consideration before segregating sports teams

5.10. Both sexes will have equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities; where segregation is deemed necessary, the single-sex sports teams will receive the same quality and amount of resources.

6. Race and ethnicity

6.1. We will ensure that pupils of all races and ethnicities (including those who have EAL) are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils, regularly reviewing our College practices to ensure that they are fair.

6.2. We will not segregate pupils on the basis of their race or ethnicity, understanding that claims of 'separate but equal' will not be tolerated, and that such actions will always be viewed as direct discrimination.

6.3. We may, however, take positive action, e.g. organising open days for pupils and families of a specific race that is under-represented, to address the particular challenges affecting pupils of one racial or ethnic group, where this can be shown to be a proportionate way of dealing with such issues.

7. Disability

7.1. We will ensure that pupils with disabilities are not singled out or treated less favourably than other pupils simply because they have a disability, which includes any mental health issue, regularly reviewing our College practices to ensure they are fair.

7.2. We will ensure that we do not discriminate against pupils with a disability by implementing a rule for all pupils that could have an adverse effect on pupils with disabilities only (for example, making physical fitness a basis for admission, or asking all pupils to deliver a presentation, as this could be unfair towards pupils with anxiety), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

7.3. We will ensure that we do not discriminate against pupils with disabilities because of something which is a consequence of their disability (for example, by not allowing a pupil on crutches outside at break time because it would take too long for him/her to get in and out), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

7.4. We will make any reasonable adjustments where possible, and provide any auxiliary aids, necessary to ensure the full inclusion of pupils with disabilities, especially where the pupil also has SEND but does not have a SEND statement or EHC plan.

7.5. We will meet our duty to undertake accessibility planning for pupils with disabilities and ensure that an Accessibility Plan is implemented and reviewed where necessary.

7.6. The College adheres to our SEND Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for pupils with SEND.

8. Religion and belief

8.1. We will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because of their religion or belief, regularly reviewing our College practices to ensure that they are fair.

8.2. We will ensure that pupils are provided with the appropriate space in which they can practice their faith, e.g. to perform their daily prayers.

8.3. Absences in relation to religious observances will be handled in accordance with the College's Attendance and Truancy Policy.

8.4. The College will liaise with local religious leaders of all faiths to inform the amount of leave pupils will be granted in relation to religious observance.

9. Sexual orientation

9.1. We will ensure that all gay, lesbian and bi-sexual pupils, or the children of gay, lesbian or bi-sexual parents, are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils, regularly reviewing our College practices to ensure that they are fair.

9.2. We will ensure that pupils are taught about the nature of marriage, including same-sex marriage by presenting the facts of English and Welsh law – teachers will not offer personal opinions when discussing marriage in RSE.

9.3. We will ensure that any religious beliefs with regards to sexual orientation are taught to pupils in an educational context, in a manner that is not prejudicial or discriminatory.

9.4. RSE lessons will be taught in accordance with our Relationships and Sex Education Policy.

9.5. We will ensure that there is a designated safe space within our College where pupils can discuss issues of sexual orientation without fear of discrimination.

10. Gender reassignment

10.1. We will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they have undergone, or are proposing to undergo, gender reassignment, or have trans* parents, regularly checking our College practices to ensure that they are fair.

10.2. We will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate absence requests for treatment and support of trans* pupils by external sources, e.g. charities such as Stonewall. Any such absences will be recorded accurately and sensitively by the SENCO to ensure the privacy of the pupil.

10.3. Pupils have the right to dress in accordance with their true gender identity within the constraints of our dress code, outlined in our College Uniform Policy.

10.4. We will ensure that there are suitable toilet and changing facilities for pupils to use.

10.5. The facilities will be made available to all pupils and pupils can use the facility they feel most comfortable.

10.6. We will ensure that there is a designated safe space within our College where trans* pupils can discuss issues of gender without fear of discrimination.

10.7. The College abides by our LGBT Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for trans* pupils with SEND.

11. Pregnancy and maternity

11.1. We will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they become pregnant, or have recently given birth, or because they are breastfeeding.

11.2. We will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate absence requests for the treatment and support of pupils who are pregnant or have just given birth.

11.3. To ensure all College-age parents and pregnant pupils are properly supported and the College can fulfil its duty of care, the College has a Supporting Pregnant Pupils and College-Age Parents Policy.

12. Looked after children (LAC)

- 12.1. LAC, and previously LAC (PLAC), will be given the highest priority for admissions, as per the requirements of our Admissions Policy.
- 12.2. We will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are looked after, or have previously been looked after, by the state.
- 12.3. A personal education plan will be created, and implemented, for all LAC and PLAC, to ensure that their education and development needs are fully covered, including appropriate transition and catch-up support to ensure that they do not fall behind.
- 12.4. We will ensure that any SEND that a LAC or PLAC has, are duly taken into account and addressed, whether this is with or without a SEND statement or EHC plan.
- 12.5. The College adheres to our LAC Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for LAC.

13. The curriculum

- 13.1. We believe that pupils should be exposed to thoughts and ideas of all kinds, however challenging or controversial, and will not make any unjustified changes to our curriculum content on the grounds of any protected characteristics that a pupil may have.
- 13.2. We will ensure, however, that the curriculum is as balanced as possible, and delivered in such a way that prevents discrimination, and the promotion of prejudicial stereotypes.
- 13.3. The observation of inclusive teaching strategies is a key aspect of the SLT's annual programme of monitoring.
- 13.4. We will respect the right of parents to withdraw their child from RSE.

14. Promoting inclusion

- 14.1. We will promote inclusion and equality at our College through:
 - Ensuring that pupils are called by their preferred names, taking into account the correct spelling, structure and pronunciation.
 - Ensuring, as far as possible, that our Principal and staff reflect the full diversity of our local community.
 - Providing an environment where prejudiced assumptions, attitudes and behaviours are continually challenged.
 - Instilling in pupils an awareness of prejudice, giving them confidence that it can, and must, be eradicated.
 - Providing a variety of educational and residential visits that expose pupils to a wide range of cultural experiences.
 - Ensuring equal access to opportunities, such as extra-curricular activities and the curriculum.
 - Taking care in the use of language and the choice of resources, so that teaching and non-teaching staff avoid reinforcing stereotypical views of society.

- Valuing the cultural experiences and contributions of all pupils, regardless of any protected characteristic that they may have.
- Communicating our policy to parents to gain their understanding, agreement and support for its provisions.
- Discussing equality issues as an agenda item for the College council.
- Promoting equality of opportunity within the wider society.

15. Supporting pupils with medical conditions

15.1. We will ensure that any medical conditions related to a pupil with a protected characteristic is fully supported in line with our Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.

16. Pupils that have left College

16.1. Our responsibility not to discriminate, harass or victimise does not end when a pupil has left College. It will continue to apply with regards to subsequent actions related to our previous relationship with the pupil, such as the provision of references.

17. Bullying and discrimination

17.1. Our Anti-bullying Policy will be used in conjunction with this policy in order to prevent, and effectively deal with, any discriminatory incidents.

17.2. Any incidents of a child protection or safeguarding nature will be reported, recorded and dealt with in line with the process in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

17.3. It the responsibility of the Principal to decide whether it is appropriate to notify social services, and/or the police, of any incident.

17.4. Concerns with regards to the handling of bullying and discrimination incidents will be dealt with via the procedures outlined in our Complaints Procedures Policy.

18. Staff training

18.1. New staff will receive relevant training on the provisions of this policy during their HR induction.

18.2. Whole-College staff briefing for will be delivered.

18.3. Staff will receive the appropriate equalities training that will:

- Focus on staff specialisms in relation to equality, for example, a focus on homophobic bullying to address a planned approach towards inclusion.
- Ensure all staff are aware of, and comply with, current equalities legislation and government recommendations.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and how they can support pupils with protected characteristics.
- Provide support for teachers to effectively manage any discrimination towards pupils with protected characteristics.

- Provide up-to-date information on the terms, concepts and current understandings relating to each of the protected characteristics.
- Develop appropriate strategies for communication between parents, educators and pupils about any issues related to a protected characteristic.
- Ensure that the College is aware of, and participates in, relevant awareness days, such as Black History Month, World Disability Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, PRIDE, and International Women's Day.

19. Monitoring and review

19.1. This policy will be reviewed by the Principal every 2 years and updated where appropriate – any amendments will be duly communicated to staff members.

Reviewed by: Mr A Jemal

Date Reviewed: 5th April 2022

This policy will next be reviewed in April 2024.