



Single Equality Policy

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Overview

The Single Equality Act which came into place in October 2010 brought together the duties that would have previously been set out in our Race, Disability and Gender policies, into one single Equality Duty. The Single Equality Act combines the existing three duties into one duty that covers all seven of the equality strands: age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. At Highfields we will ensure that at every level, in all our work and throughout all aspects of the school community, everyone will be treated equally. This Single Equality Policy summarises the school's approach in ensuring equality for all.

I. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Data Protection Act 2018

This policy has due regard to statutory and good practice guidelines, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act 2010 and schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children'
- DfE (2018) 'Gender separation in mixed schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Equality Act 2010: advice for schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Sandwell Admissions Procedure
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Attendance and Absence Policy
- Data Protection Policy

2. Protected Characteristics

- 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.

3. Equality objectives

The school is committed to promoting the welfare and equality of all its staff, pupils and other members of the school community. To achieve this, the school has established the following objectives:

- Monitor changes to the curriculum to ensure they result in good outcomes for pupils in all vulnerable groups, and to review the curriculum considering new performance measures
- Improve the quality of support for pupils in all vulnerable groups in the classroom
- Continue to develop the nurture support offered to improve the well-being of pupils in all vulnerable groups.
- To tackle prejudice and promote understanding in relation to people with disabilities
- The school will regularly review the steps being taken and the progress made towards the achievement of these objectives and, in line with the specific duties of the PSED, publish this information on the school website every year.
- The school will update and publish its equality objectives at least every four years. (March 2025)

4. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body will:

- Be responsible for ensuring the school 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 school 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.

The headteacher will:

- Implement this policy and its procedures.
- Ensure that all staff members receive the appropriate equality and diversity training as part of their induction and CPD.
- Ensure that all parents, visitors and contractors are aware of, and comply with, the provisions of this policy.
- Actively challenge and take appropriate action in any case of discriminatory practice.
- Address any reported incidents of harassment or bullying in line with DfE guidance.
- Review and amend this policy, taking into account new legislation and government guidance, and previously reported incidents, in order to improve procedures.

Staff will:

- Be alert to the possible harassment of pupils, both inside and outside of the school, and to deal with incidents of harassment and/or discrimination as the highest priority.
- Carry out their statutory duties relating to equal opportunities and inclusivity, and pertaining to their specific roles.
- Have due regard to the sensitivities of all pupils, and not provide material that may cause offence.
- Act as a role model for equality, diversity and inclusion across the whole school community.

4. Sex

For the purpose of this policy, sex refers a pupil's biological assignment at birth depending on their reproductive organs. The school understands that some pupils identify as a gender different to the sex they were assigned at birth, and we will support pupils through their transitioning phases.

Staff 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.

The school will only separate pupils by sex where there is reasonable justification for doing so, or if one of the following applies:

- Pupils will suffer a disadvantage connected to their sex
- One sex has needs that are different from the needs of the other sex
- Participation in an activity by pupils of one sex is disproportionately low

The school 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.

Pupils will be offered equal opportunities to undertake any activity in the school, e.g. in relation to technology lessons, all pupils will be allowed to choose which skills they learn.

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

6. Race and ethnicity

Staff will ensure that pupils of all races and ethnicities are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils and the school will regularly review its practices to ensure that they are fair.

Staff will ensure pupils with EAL are treated equally and fairly, while ensuring they are supported at all times.

The school 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.

7. Disability

Staff will ensure that pupils with disabilities are not singled out or treated less favourably than other pupils simply because they have a disability, including any mental health disability. School will regularly reviewing our school practices to ensure they are fair. The school will avoid implementing rules that could have an adverse effect on pupils with disabilities unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim. Staff will ensure that they do not discriminate against pupils with disabilities because of something which is a consequence of their disability unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim. The school will make reasonable adjustments, and provide resources necessary to ensure the full inclusion of pupils with disabilities, including those without an EHC plan.

The school will meet its duty to undertake accessibility planning for pupils with disabilities and ensure that an Accessibility Plan is implemented and reviewed where necessary.

The school will adhere to its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for pupils with SEND.

8. Religion and belief

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because of their religion or belief.

The school will ensure that pupils are provided with the appropriate space in which they can practice their faith, e.g. to perform their daily prayers. Absences in relation to religious observances will be handled in accordance with the school's Attendance and Absence Policy.

9. Sexual orientation

Staff will ensure that all gay, lesbian and bisexual pupils, or the children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents, are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. The school 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 RSHE. The school will educate pupils on positive relationships, families and gender identities within the LGBTQ+ community. RSHE lessons will be taught in accordance with the school's policy. Staff 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. Staff will support LGBTQ+ pupils to feel comfortable and ensure they can celebrate their identity.

10. Gender reassignment

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably in relation to gender reassignment, i.e. because they are trans or have trans parents, siblings or other family members. The school recognises that gender reassignment does not necessarily involve physical change, and can be solely social and emotional.

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

The school will ensure that there are suitable toilet facilities available for pupils to use, including a more private space if desired. The school will support trans pupils to feel comfortable and ensure they can celebrate their identity.

The school will ensure that there is a designated safe space within the school where trans pupils can discuss issues of gender without fear of discrimination.

11. Looked-after children (LAC)

LAC and previously LAC (PLAC) will be given the highest priority for admissions, as per the requirements of Sandwell admissions procedures. Staff 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. A personal education plan (PEP) 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.

Staff will ensure that any SEND that LAC or PLAC have are duly taken into account and addressed, whether this is with or without an EHC plan.

12. Promoting inclusion

The school will promote inclusion and equality at our school through:

- Ensuring that pupils are called by their preferred names, which may be different from their legal names, taking into account the correct spelling, structure and pronunciation.
- 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 extracurricular 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 school council.

- Promoting equality of opportunity within the wider society.
- Ensuring admission arrangements will not unfairly disadvantage a pupil from a particular social or racial group, or with SEND.

13. The Public Sector Equality Duty

The school will meet its duty to publish:

- Annual information to demonstrate how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, taking into account the specific circumstances surrounding pupils who have any of the protected characteristics outlined in the Protected characteristics section of this policy.
 - Equality objectives (at least every four years) outlining how the school may further equality.
- There are some protected characteristics where statistical data is less likely to be readily available, and pupils will not be pressured into providing information related to any characteristic which they may identify with.

14. Bullying and discrimination

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

Any bullying 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. The headteacher will decide whether it is appropriate to notify social services, the police or any other agencies of incidents that happen.

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

15. Recruitment and selection

The school will aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics. The shortlisting of applicants will be done by more than one person. Job advertisements will avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. The school will take steps to ensure that vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which will only be used with the head of HR's approval, such as:

- Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
- Positive action to recruit disabled persons.
- Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

The school is required by law to ensure that all staff are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, will be expected to produce original documents, e.g. a passport, before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

The school will monitor applicants' ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure and share this information with the HR provider. Provision of this information will be voluntary and will not adversely affect an applicant's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information will be removed from applications before the shortlisting process, and will be kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy.

16. Staff training

Staff training needs and associated development opportunities will be identified through regular staff appraisals, in line with the school's Teacher Appraisal Policy and Support Staff Performance Management Policy. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made based on merit. The school will adopt good practice in terms of data collection and use this data to monitor and measure the attraction, recruitment, retention and progression of staff.

17. Disability discrimination

The school will encourage staff who are disabled or become disabled to inform the headteacher or their line manager about their condition so that the school can support them as appropriate.

Staff experiencing difficulties at work because of their disability (physical or otherwise) may wish to contact their line manager or to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Their line manager may wish to offer a referral to occupational health to collect further details about possible adjustments.

The governing board will monitor the physical environment of the school premises to consider whether certain features place physically disabled staff, job applicants, service users, or other stakeholders at a substantial disadvantage compared to others. Where reasonable, the school will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

18. Breaches of this policy

If a member of staff believes that they may have been discriminated against, they will be encouraged to raise the matter through the school's Grievance Policy. If they believe that they may have been subject to harassment, they will be encouraged to raise the matter with their line manager and/or the head of HR. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The school takes a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

19. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the headteacher and governing board annually and updated where appropriate – any amendments will be duly communicated to staff.