

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Including Early Years Foundation Stage

Last reviewed:	July 2024
Next review date:	July 2025
Responsibility:	Head of People
Governance:	Full Board

The Equal Opportunities Policy is founded on the educational aims and ethos of Plymouth College.

Plymouth College (“the School”) is committed to promoting understanding of the principles and practices of equality and justice. We welcome applications from candidates with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our pupils for today’s world. We concentrate on educating the individual, to provide a welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish. This commitment is shared by pupils, staff and governors. We are committed to equal opportunity for all pupils, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief), cultural or linguistic background, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, or maternity. We also welcome applications from pupils with special needs and disabilities, and refer parents to our Admissions Policy, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND Policy) and to our Accessibility Plan in response to the Equality Act 2010. These are made available on the School’s website.

This Policy also applies to, and sits in conjunction with the School’s Recruitment Policy, Bullying & Harassment Policy, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Plymouth College endeavours to provide equal opportunities in employment and to avoid unlawful discrimination on any grounds. Furthermore, the School is committed to the elimination of unconscious bias, promoting an ethos of inclusion, respect for others and celebrating diversity in all its forms throughout the School community. Reasonable consideration of requests to support diversity will always be considered.

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1. Aims

The aims of this policy and the School's ethos as a whole is to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics
- Promote equality of opportunity for all members of the School community
- Comply with the School's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010.

All members of the School community are expected to comply with this policy. All parents are expected to support the aims of this policy and the School's ethos of tolerance and respect. Our aim is to equip pupils with an awareness of our diverse society and to appreciate the value of difference and tolerance. Please see our Pupils Personal Development (PPD), Behaviour Management, Anti-Bullying and Curriculum policies for more details.

This policy equally applies to staff obligations around the treatment of pupils, customers, parents, visitors and members of the public, both in and outside of the work environment. Staff with managerial responsibilities should seek advice from the Human Resources department if they have any doubts about the application of this policy.

This School recognises that direct and indirect discrimination might take place and therefore sees the need for a positive and effective Equal Opportunities Policy.

- We will promote the concept of equality of opportunity throughout the organisation, both for those adults within the community of the School and for all pupils;
- We seek to develop an understanding of, and promotion of, human equality and equal opportunities;
- We will promote good relations between members of different racial, cultural and religious groups and communities; and
- We will enable pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour and relationships with others.

We hold the following principles to be central to our School:

- Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief), cultural or linguistic background, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity or special educational needs or disability is not acceptable.
- The primary objective of the School will be to educate, develop and prepare all our pupils for life, whatever their race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment/identity, culture or ability.
- Pupils, teachers, support staff and parents will further this objective by contributing towards a happy and caring environment and by showing respect for, and appreciation of, one another as individuals.

Our Pupil Personal Development (PPD) Policy, among others, outlines the steps we take to provide a multicultural education and encourage tolerance and understanding.

2. The Legal Background

The main statutory provisions covering discrimination are the following:

- Employment Rights Act 1996,
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974,
- Equality Act 2010

Also relevant are:

- Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- The Statutory Code of Practice in the Duty to Promote Race Equality

The School's values, aims and objectives all accord with the equal treatment of people promoted by these laws and regulations.

3. Responsibilities

The governing body will monitor and review the working policy and procedures by allocation of duties to committees of the governing body.

The Head has broader responsibility for Equal Opportunities across the school, this includes responsibility for ensuring equal opportunities in the curriculum across the School. The Head must also present general reports, statistics and incident reports to the governing body and its committees as agreed.

The Senior Deputy Head and Head of People will ensure the policy is updated inline with any legislative changes as they occur. Key changes will be highlighted and communicated appropriately.

All staff are responsible for following the policy and reporting incidents of unequal treatment to the appropriate senior member of staff.

4. Equal Opportunities for Pupils

4.1 Admissions

The School treats every application for admission in a fair and equal way in accordance with this policy and the School's Admissions Policy. The School invites and accepts applications from, and admits, all prospective pupils irrespective of their gender, disability, gender reassignment/identity, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief) or special educational needs or disability ('SEND'). In order to cope with the high academic and social demands of the School pupils should be fluent English speakers but tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be arranged where appropriate and at the parent's expense. Parents must inform the School when submitting the Registration Form of any special circumstances relating to their child that may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and/or ability to participate fully in the education provided by the School. The School will seek to cater for pupils with disabilities. Only in cases where a pupil's needs would not be met by our teaching ratio, resources, facilities or curriculum would we consider not admitting a child. In such rare cases we offer clear advice to parents as to where they might look for a suitable educational establishment.

4.2 Registration

Pupils' names will be accurately recorded and every reasonable effort made to be correctly pronounced. All pupils are permitted a chosen name by which they wish to be known. Pupils will be encouraged to accept and respect names from all cultures.

4.3 Discrimination

All forms of discrimination by any person within the School's responsibility will be treated seriously as such behaviour is unacceptable. Racist symbols are forbidden in School. Staff should be aware of possible cultural assumptions and bias within their own attitudes.

4.4 Religious and linguistic diversity

The School views linguistic diversity positively and gives support to help pupils for whom English is a second language play a full part in School life. We also celebrate religious diversity and encourage tolerance and a wide awareness of spirituality. Although most Assemblies involve Christian worship there are many occasions where we celebrate other religious occasions and pupils are made aware that they do not have to take part in the more religious parts of the occasion. We also try to give a clear indication of the religious content of an Assembly so parents of other faiths can make an educated decision on whether their child can attend.

Please see our PPD Policy and RE syllabus for more details of how we encourage all pupils to take a wide interest in their spiritual development.

4.5 School Curriculum

The School aims to ensure that pupils have equal access to programmes of study and non-compulsory courses according to aptitude and ability.

- Pupils have equal access to the National Curriculum programmes of study (unless disapplied) throughout each Key Stage, and non-compulsory courses, according to the aptitude and ability;
- The School is committed to full education inclusion;
- All subjects will have equality of opportunity at their core and make explicit references within schemes of work;
- School and faculty development plans will act to improve the learning of pupils according to this analysis;
- School rules and the Code of Conduct for pupils clearly and explicitly forbid the verbalisation or vocalisation of discrimination on the grounds race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment/identity;
- Positive attitudes and awareness development for equality of opportunity is specially taught through the PSE and tutor programme; and
- All subjects will have equality of opportunity at their core and make explicit references within schemes of work.

4.6 Resources

The School's aim is to provide for all pupils according to their needs irrespective of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment/identity

4.7 Transgender, Gender Reassignment, Gender Identity

The School supports transgender pupils by promoting a respectful and inclusive community where all young people are protected from discrimination. We work with each pupil individually, listening to their wishes and respecting their right to privacy, whilst working with both the young person and their parents whenever possible and appropriate. Any support offered by the School is at a pace which is right for the young person.

4.8 Practical measures to support transgender pupils

The organisation of the curriculum enables flexibility for transgender pupils to be taught with the gender with which they identify and personal pronouns used which are appropriate. Additionally, we work with each individual to ensure that they feel comfortable in terms of access to toilets and changing facilities and the uniform code is being reviewed so that all pupils will have the option of wearing trousers.

4.9 Boarding and overnight accommodation on trips and visits

In accordance with the ISI regulations, pupils in boarding who are undergoing gender reassignment may be permitted to use the accommodation for the gender role in which they identify, should they wish to do so. However, this is a sensitive issue and before any decision is taken, we need to ensure that this would be appropriate for all pupils and any judgement made in discussion with the relevant pupils and parents and considering the interests, safety and privacy of all boarders affected and, if appropriate, risk assessments put in place. This approach is also taken when considering overnight accommodation on residential trips and visits.

4.10 Requests for variation in School uniform

All pupils are required to wear uniform. The Head will consider written requests from parents and pupils for variations in the uniform for reasons related to disability, gender reassignment/identity, sex, pregnancy or maternity, temporary injury, and/or on grounds of religion or belief, provided they are consistent with the School's policy on Health and Safety. The Head will consider such requests on a case by case basis, and normally arrange to meet with the parents to discuss the implications of such a request.

5 Special Educational Needs

Linsay Eckersley is the School SENCo. The School helps pupils with SEND to take a full part in the life of the School by developing learning plans and offering appropriate support. The following steps help ensure that we minimise any obstacles that prevent learning or stop pupils from taking advantage of educational opportunities:

1. Setting suitable learning challenges

Please see our SEND Policy for details of how teachers plan lessons and teach in such a way that takes into account the abilities and needs of the class. The setting arrangements in Years 5 and 6 help achieve this in the upper part of the Prep School.

2. Responding to pupils' diverse needs

Teachers will use their knowledge, and the support of our SEND team, to differentiate tasks, to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. The following factors will all be considered in this respect:

- Creating effective learning environments
- Ensuring children are motivated and concentrating
- Using teaching approaches that ensure equality of opportunity
- Making use of appropriate assessment procedures
- Setting children appropriate targets for learning

3. Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils

To overcome potential barriers, teachers will, for example, take into consideration the following specific needs of children, and how these might affect children's approaches to learning:

- SEND (e.g. Asperger Syndrome, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), general learning difficulties etc.)
- difficulties with communication, language and literacy
- behaviour difficulties
- physical impairment

- emotional difficulties
- English as an additional language (EAL)
- race and ethnicity
- religious belief
- gender issues
- social background
- ability

Teachers will also need to be aware of what children bring to their learning, from home and their prior experiences. They need to ensure that children from different cultures, with different religions and worldviews, have full access to the curriculum. They need to ensure that their cultures are reflected in the classroom environment, and that no child is inhibited in their learning because of gender.

Consideration of the following issues might assist the teacher in planning for an inclusive curriculum, and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

- Employing multi-sensory teaching and learning approaches (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile).
- Adapting the classroom to suit the needs of individuals e.g. sitting a child with ADHD away from distractions; having quiet work areas for those who need it; sitting a child with visual impairment where they can clearly see the interactive whiteboard; having necessary resources available for children; ensuring wheelchair access, where appropriate.
- Planning an accessible curriculum for all (are learning objectives achievable for all? Is the work relevant, contextualised and meaningful to the children? Is work effectively differentiated so that all children can achieve their potential?).
- Differentiating - adapting resources to support learning: large print on written resources for children with visual impairment; visual clues and bilingual texts to support tasks for children with EAL; clear routines and timetables for the day for children with Asperger Syndrome; books and resources to support and motivate both genders; extension activities for gifted and talented children.
- Giving consideration for the emotional well-being of children (remember that teachers are in the business of educating the 'whole' child, and a happy and motivated child will achieve more in the classroom).
- Managing disabilities (find out what the nature of the disability is. What are the child's specific needs likely to be? How might you support or facilitate the child's learning?).
- Being aware of the possible stresses inherent in pupil's lives and being sensitive to any mental health issues that might arise.

In conclusion, equal opportunities, and inclusive practice in the classroom involves careful planning, by all professionals concerned, to ensure effective learning opportunities for all children. Staff are encouraged to share good practice at all times.

Please see our SEND Policy for details of how we ensure equal opportunities for pupils with physical disabilities.

6. Equal Opportunities in Employment

6.1 Staff Recruitment

- The School will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and termination (which includes selection for redundancy). The recruitment process will be conducted in line with its Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures and in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the role in terms of relevant experience, abilities and qualifications, as well as to meet the School's compliance requirements. All internal posts will be awarded to the best candidate based on strict professional criteria;
- Advertisements and job specifications will all carry a statement that this School is an Equal Opportunities employer, and welcomes applications for all posts from appropriately qualified persons regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment/identity, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief) or special educational needs or disability;
- Application forms for jobs will include a question about equal opportunities – or interview questions will do so, for example how the applicant contributes to the policy;
- People with disabilities will be offered facilities at interviews to enable them to demonstrate their suitability for employment;
- Candidates for vacant posts will be assessed against relevant criteria only, i.e. skills, qualifications and experience in selection for recruitment;
- The School will make and keep information about the sex, ethnic background disability and age of candidates for appointments, and actual appointments; and inform the governing body whenever the governors request the figures;
- Health related questions may not be asked before or at interview.
- Job applicants may not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which the School may rely on. For example:
 - 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 selection or decision-making process).
- Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check.
- Staff must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people, including current and former staff, job applicants, pupils and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace, and on work-related trips or events.

6.2 Discrimination

- The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:
 - **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay. Direct discrimination can include associative discrimination, where a person is treated less favourably because of their association with an individual with a protected characteristic, and perception discrimination, where a person is treated less favourably because of the mistaken belief that they possess a protected characteristic.
 - **Indirect discrimination:** a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular protected characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.

- **Harassment:** this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- **Victimisation:** retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment. This includes where someone mistakenly believes that the person victimised has done so.

6.3 Disability & Reasonable Adjustments

6.3.1 Disability is defined as a mental or physical condition that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long term means that the condition must generally last, or be likely to last, for more than 12 months.

6.3.2 The School will make reasonable adjustments to assist in the application and interviewing process of any disability identified by potential applicants and will assist members of staff with a disability to participate in training and development activities.

6.3.3 The School aims to take reasonable steps, within the resources available, to develop an environment that reduces barriers in order to enable disabled persons to participate in all aspects of School life on equal terms.

6.3.4 The School will consider making any reasonable adjustments to either the work environment or working processes that affect a disabled member of staff in accordance with the duties specified under the Equality Act 2010.

6.3.5 Reasonable adjustments are made after consultation with the individual, line manager, a member of the HR department and any relevant external bodies.

6.3.6 The School recognises that some of its historic listed buildings present access problems for people with mobility issues. The School's access audit identifies and prioritises accessibility issues and links to all future planning activities. All future new buildings will be designed with accessibility in mind.

6.3.7 All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and not to discriminate against other members of staff and people working on behalf of the School.

6.4 Staff Development

All staff will be given equal opportunities to develop their professional skills.

- All employees have equal chances of training, career development and promotion;
- Part-time and fixed term staff should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.
- All recruits to the organisation will be offered induction training which will include a reference to the organisation's Equal Opportunities Policy;
- Staff development opportunities will be monitored and figures presented to the governors annually, or more often if requested by the governing body. All staff, in particular those concerned with selection and promotion, are given equality awareness training; and
- People becoming disabled while in employment will be given positive help to retain their jobs or to be considered for redeployment if that is necessary.

To educate and further mitigate risk of bullying and harassing behaviours from being experienced at the School, all employees will receive regular, repeated training on Bullying and Harassment to increase awareness. This will include what to do if you do observe or experience bullying or harassment at work, and what behaviours we do not tolerate as an organisation.

7. Monitoring and Review

We monitor and review the effectiveness of this Policy by conducting an annual audit, examining different aspects of School life, and incorporating the views of a range of stakeholders, to ensure that no pupils are being disadvantaged or subject to a detriment (because of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or gender identity, pregnancy) through our curriculum, co-curriculum or facilities. The Head reports to the Governors annually on the Policy's effectiveness in practice.

8. Breach of this policy

If an aspect of the curriculum, co-curriculum or our facilities is found to be in breach of this Policy, we aim to remedy this as soon as is practically possible, and within 12 months. Pupils who are in breach of this Policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's Behaviour Management Policy.

Schools have a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent the sexual harassment of staff at work, including via third parties. Plymouth College does not tolerate behaviours which breach this policy from any member of our community.

Staff who breach this policy will be dealt with in accordance with our Bullying & Harassment and Disciplinary Procedures. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination and victimisation may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal without notice. Members of staff who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

If you believe that you have suffered harassment, bullying or discrimination, or witnessed it happening to someone else in the School, you can raise the matter. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate. There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff who complain about or report discrimination. If you believe you have been victimised for making a complaint or report of discrimination, or have witnessed it happening to someone else in the workplace, staff should raise this through our Grievance Procedure.

The School encourages the reporting of all types of potential discrimination, as this assists us in ensuring that diversity, equity and inclusion principles are adhered to in the School. However, making a false allegation in bad faith, or that you know to be untrue, will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.