



Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

At Great Walstead our environment is not culturally diverse (a reflection of the wider local community) and we are therefore very conscious of the need to provide experiences for pupils of other cultures. We do this through PSHE lessons, assemblies and chapels and the curriculum in other subjects, notably RE.

Great Walstead is designated as a Christian School under Statutory Instrument 2003 No 3284: Designation of Schools having a Religious Character (Independent Schools) (England) (No.2) Order 2003. The School may include a preference for someone who is able to support the Christian Ethos of the School for teaching positions, in accordance with Regulation 39 of The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) regulations 2003 provision for independent schools of a religious character.

General Principles

The principle of equality in employment and in education is wholeheartedly supported at Great Walstead School. The School will tackle inappropriate attitudes and practices through staff leading by example, through the PSHE programme, through the supportive School culture and through the School's policies.

The School affords equal respect to all members of its community, be they pupils, parents, governors and staff. Everyone in the School is encouraged to foster a similar respect for other people and groups within society and to be sensitive to the needs, the rights and the feelings of others.

Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment. The School has a separate *Dignity at Work Policy* which deals with these issues

The School recognises the benefits of having a diverse school community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Pupils will be taught to value and respect others. The School is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and is committed to equality of opportunity for all members of the school community. Taking into account the School's designation as a Christian School, in the provision of equal opportunities, the School recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination on the basis of:

- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief (including lack of religion or belief)
- gender
- sexual orientation

- age
- marital or civil partnership status (in the case of adult members of the community)

These are called the 'protected characteristics'. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic'. The School also opposes all bullying, including cyberbullying, and unlawful discrimination on the basis that a person has a special educational need or learning difficulty or their sporting ability.

Aims

This policy is intended to assist the School to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination. Through the operation of this policy the School aims to:

- communicate the commitment of the School to the promotion of equal opportunities
- promote equal treatment within the School for all members of the school community
- create and maintain an open and supportive environment which is free from discrimination
- foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the School
- be alert to the early signs of needs that could lead to later difficulties, and respond as appropriate
- remove or help to overcome barriers for pupils where they already exist
- ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against any person on any ground listed as a protected characteristic
- make it clear and ensure that all discriminatory words, behaviour and images are treated as unacceptable
- take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage (the 'reasonable adjustments' duty)
- ensure regular reviews of the effectiveness of the policy in line with the School's policy review cycle.

All members of the school community have personal responsibility for the ongoing, practical application of the Equal Opportunities Policy. The School interacts with numerous other organisations, groups and individuals. It is important that the School ethos with regard to equality issues extends across all areas of its work.

All staff have a responsibility to ensure the policy is carried through effectively and should give active support to the policy. They should encourage pupils and colleagues to report any instances of discrimination. The School takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that any instances of discrimination are investigated fully, and appropriate, sensitive and responsive action is taken. In the case of pupils and staff this could involve the School's disciplinary procedures.

Equal Opportunities in Employment

The School will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy. Job descriptions and person specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary. This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's *Recruitment, Selection and Disclosures Policy*.

The School will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the School considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so. The School will make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

Staff development will underpin the Equal Opportunities Policy and raise awareness of equal opportunities issues. Appointments will be made in accordance with the School's *Recruitment and Selection of Staff Procedure*.

Dignity at Work

The School has a separate *Dignity at Work Policy* concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any grounds, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

Pupils

The School will endeavour to ensure that all pupils have equal access to all elements of the whole curriculum. Every possible step will be taken to develop the potential of each individual in terms of their personality and talents, and to provide a broad, balanced and differentiated education, free from stereotyping, to all pupils.

The School, in its dealings with pupils, will have regard to the merits of individuals and not to their gender, colour, ethnic origin, age, socio-economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, family circumstances, sexual orientation or other relevant distinction. We are a non-selective school and we believe that the educational experience can only be enriched if children are exposed to as wide a range of cultural experiences as possible whilst they are developing.

The Curriculum

The curriculum will reflect the commitment of the School to the principle of equality of opportunity.

The curriculum encompasses:

- needs assessment
- subject content and resources for learning
- pupil-centred teaching and learning
- assessment of pupils
- recording of achievement
- evaluation of provision
- admissions procedures, timetabling and rooming systems, which will be reviewed to ensure that as far as possible no pupil is disadvantaged because of disabilities or special needs.

Teaching and learning styles will be employed which are in keeping with the ethos of equality of opportunity. Staff are expected to be sensitive to the needs of all pupils. The School will provide individual support for learning as appropriate to pupil need. The School will employ reporting and reviewing procedures for the assessment of the learning needs and achievements of all pupils.

Teaching staff will monitor and evaluate teaching and learning materials to ensure that they are free from racist, sexist and other discriminatory assumptions, images and language. In areas where this is difficult to achieve, for example in the use of the internet or in the study of art, media and literature, staff should be careful to place the material in its cultural and historical context.

Staff involved with community work or work placement organisations should be aware of equal opportunity issues in the environment or workplace used by the pupils.

Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that staff in their teaching teams are monitoring and reviewing equal opportunities issues in their curriculum area.

The Law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, the School has an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Types of unlawful discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. An example of direct discrimination would be refusing to employ a woman because she is pregnant.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic (although it does not explicitly include pregnancy and maternity, which is covered by indirect sex discrimination) such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (although it does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, and (according to guidance from the Government and ACAS) pregnancy and maternity).

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that she/he has a particular protected characteristic when she/he does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity), by third parties such as clients or customers. For an employer to be liable:

- the harassment must have occurred on at least two previous occasions (although not necessarily by the same harasser or suffering the same type of harassment)
- it must be aware that the previous harassment has taken place
- it must have failed to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment from recurring..

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because she/he made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because she/s=he is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if she/he acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

All staff have a right to equality of opportunity. All staff have a duty to implement and uphold this policy.

Breach of the Equal Opportunity policy is a potentially serious disciplinary matter. Similarly, unsubstantiated accusations of discrimination for malicious purposes could be a serious disciplinary offence. Anyone who believes that they may have been disadvantaged on discriminatory grounds is entitled to raise the matter through the School's Grievance procedure.