

## 17a – Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy for equality of opportunity, including adjustments for accessibility

### Mission Statement

Our girls will change the world

- We are a Catholic community inspired by the vision of our founders and passionate about shaping a better future.
- We empower pupils with outstanding results, a love of learning and an alternative way of thinking.
- Augustinians are ethical leaders sowing joy, truth and courage.
- In this school freedom and generosity of spirit flourish. We seek a sustainable and prosperous future for all the world's communities.
- We cherish love for our neighbour, welcoming different faiths and cultures. Learning through dialogue we have hearts open to the whole world.

## 1. Introduction

1.1. St Augustine's Priory recognises the benefits of having a diverse community, members of which value one another and the different contributions everyone can make. The school is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and will take every possible step to ensure equality of opportunity for all members of the community. In the provision of equal opportunities, the school recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. These characteristics are recognised and legally protected; the use of the term protected characteristics will be used henceforth in this policy. All policies and practices will conform with the principles of equal opportunities, equality and diversity. The school community shall not be disadvantaged by any policies or practices which cannot be justified as necessary for operational purposes.

1.2. **Related policies:** This Equal Opportunities Policy is in accordance with and must be read and applied in conjunction with all of the school's policies, including the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy in the Employment manual; Admissions Policy; Promoting Good Behaviour Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy, Disability Policy, Accessibility Plan and the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Policy.

## 2. Policy statement

2.1. **Application:** This policy applies to the school's employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, to ex-employees, to job applicants and to individuals such as agency staff, consultants, volunteers and Governors who are not our employees, but who may work, volunteer or attend at the School (collectively workers).

2.2. **Policy aims:** Through the operation of this policy we aim 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 and for everyone to feel valued within the school

- ensure that no one is treated less favourably than any other person or victimised on any ground listed above
- make it clear that, 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 adjustment' duty)
- ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

**2.3. Unlawful and unfair discrimination and victimisation** on the grounds listed above is unacceptable and will not be tolerated within the school because:

- such conduct can be detrimental and harmful to the person who is discriminated or victimised against, and to those who engage in such behaviour, and those who support them
- in some situations, the school may be at risk of being held responsible for the acts of individual members of the School Community and therefore shall not tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour
- such conduct is contrary to all our aims and values, our internal culture and the reputation of the school.

### 3. Forms of discrimination

**3.1. Types:** Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

**3.2. Direct discrimination:** Direct discrimination occurs where someone is put at a disadvantage for a reason related to one or more of the grounds set out in paragraph 1 above. For example, rejecting an applicant of one race because it is considered they would not "fit in" on the grounds of their race could be direct discrimination.

**3.3. Indirect discrimination:** Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for example, their sex or race. For example, a minimum height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If these criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with sex, it would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of sex.

### 4. Admission

**4.1. Applicants:** St Augustine's Priory is a girls' school with boys in the Nursery. The school accepts applications and admits pupils irrespective of the appropriate protective characteristic(s) in the Nursery and, as a girls' school, thereafter and will not discriminate on these grounds in the terms on which a place is offered, subject to section 8, below. The school will treat every application in a fair, open-minded way.

**4.2. Selection:** Every application will be considered on its merits within the school's criteria for selection on grounds of the pupil's ability and aptitude, but this will not be done as a way of excluding pupils with special educational needs and/or disability, subject to section 8 below.

**4.3. Admissions Policy:** The School's Admissions Policy reflects the school's approach towards equal opportunities and is consistent with this Policy.

## 5. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

**5.1. Equal access:** The school will afford all pupils equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects including all sports, irrespective of the appropriate protected characteristic(s), subject to considerations of safety and welfare, paragraph 5.2 and section 8, below.

**5.2. Positive discrimination:** The School may afford pupils of a particular racial group, or pupils with special educational needs and/or disability, access to additional education or training to meet the special needs of the pupils in that group, for example, special language training for groups whose first language is not English.

**5.3. Exclusions:** The School will not discriminate against any pupil by excluding him or her from the school, or by subjecting him or her to any other detriment, on the grounds of their appropriate protected characteristic(s), subject to section 8 of this Policy.

**5.4. Teaching and School materials:** Efforts are made to recognise and be aware of the possibility of bias (for example gender or racial), so that this can be eliminated in both the school's teaching and learning materials and teaching styles. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum so as to avoid stereotypes and bias. *The school will ensure that the way in which its teaching covers issues, thoughts and ideas of all kinds does not subject individual pupils to discrimination in relation to the protected characteristics listed above. Staff are expected to be sensitive about equal opportunities in their teaching and guard against the transmission, through the content and delivery of the curriculum, of attitudes which stereotype people or label individual pupils as inferior or limited. This includes through the planning of lessons, teaching methods, classroom resources, behaviour management, etc., and through the 'hidden lessons' implicit in other activities about their value as a person, their human rights, the options available to them and their expectations for adult life*

**5.5. Pupil interaction:** All pupils are encouraged to work and play freely with, and have respect for, all other pupils, irrespective of their protected characteristics. Positive attitudes are fostered towards all groups in society through the curriculum and ethos of the school, and pupils will be encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.

## 6. School uniform

**6.1. The Uniform Policy** is consistent with this Policy. The school's policy on uniform applies equally to all pupils, with due consideration for safety and pupil welfare.

**6.2. Symbols of faith:** Certain items of jewellery, such as the Kara bangle, and certain items of headwear, such as the turban and headscarves, may be worn by pupils when doing so is based on manifesting religious or racial beliefs or identity. This is subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the school's existing Uniform Policy principles. Where there is uncertainty as to

whether an item may be worn under this section, the issue must be referred by the pupil or his or her parents to the Headteacher, whose decision will be final, subject to the Complaints procedure.

## 7. Principles

- 7.1. Religion:** The School's religious ethos, services and school timetable are set in accordance with the Catholic tradition but the school respects the right and freedom of individuals to worship in accordance with other faiths, or no faith, subject always to their respecting the rights and freedoms of the School Community as a whole and considerations of safety and welfare.
- 7.2. Special educational needs and/or disability:** We are an inclusive school which welcomes members of the school community with disabilities and special educational needs. We maintain and drive a positive culture towards inclusion of disabled people and those with special educational needs in all the activities of the school and we will not treat a member of the school community less favourably on these grounds without justification. Our Policy on Special Educational Needs and our Accessibility Plan Policy are consistent with this policy and are available from the school website.
- 7.3. Definitions:** Children have 'special educational needs' if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A disability is a "physical or mental impairment which has a substantial, long-term, adverse effect on the ability to perform normal day-to-day activities" (Equality Act 2010). For further clarification please refer to the policies mentioned in above.
- 7.4. Informing the School:** In accordance with the School's Terms and Conditions, parents of pupils must notify the Headteacher in writing if they are aware or suspect that the pupil (or prospective pupil) has a disability or learning difficulty. The registration form enables prospective parents to give details of their child's disability when applying for a place at the school. Parents must provide copies of all written reports and other relevant information upon request. Providing the school with such information will enable the school to support the pupil as much as possible, including during the admissions process. Parents may also wish to inform the school of any disability or learning difficulty of their own which might be useful to the school to enable adaptations to be made to meetings or communications and/or to support the welfare of their child. Confidential information of this kind will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis.
- 7.5. Admission of children with special educational needs and/or a disability:** Applications for a place at the school will be considered on the basis that all 'reasonable adjustments' (see definition below) will be made by the school in order to cater for the child's special educational needs and/or disability. The school will not offer a place if, after all reasonable adjustments have been considered, the school will not be able to provide adequately for the pupil's physical and educational needs.
- 7.6. Existing pupils:** Where the School becomes aware of special educational needs and/or disability of an existing pupil, the school will do all that is reasonable to assist the pupil whilst within the

school, which may include making 'reasonable adjustments'. Parents will be asked to withdraw the pupil, without being charged Fees in Lieu of Notice and with the Acceptance Deposit returned, if, in the professional judgement of the Headteacher, and after consultation with the parents and the pupil (where appropriate), the school cannot provide adequately for the pupil's physical and educational needs after all reasonable adjustments have been made. The school will do what is reasonable to help parents to find an alternative placement which will provide their child with the necessary environment and level of teaching and support.

**7.7. Reasonable adjustments:** The School has an on-going duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs in respect of the education and associated services provided to ensure that such pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other pupils. This is a broad expression that covers all aspects of school life, for example: the curriculum; classroom organisation and timetabling; access to School facilities, clubs and visits; the schools' sports and other school policies. Reasonable adjustments may typically include: uniform adjustments, adapted curriculum, bespoke staffing for trips, exam access arrangements, application of Promoting Good Behaviour Policy and student mentoring

**7.8. Access:** The School shall monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether disabled users of the premises are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and proportionate, the school will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises. The school has an Accessibility Plan, which is reviewed annually and is available on each School's website.

## 8. Responsibilities

**8.1. All members of the school community** are expected to comply with this policy and therefore to treat others with dignity at all times without regard to their protected characteristic(s) except where common decency and consideration dictate.

**8.2. Overall responsibility:** The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the effective operation of the School's Equal Opportunities Policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. The Governing Body has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its accessibility, availability, maintenance and review to the Bursar.

**8.3. Management:** Those working at a management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the aims and objectives of the school with regard to equal opportunities.

## 9. Monitoring and review

**9.1. Monitoring:** To ensure that this policy is operating effectively with respect to admission and selection, and to identify those sections of the local community which may be under-represented in the School, the School monitors applicants' age, sex, race, disability and religious belief as part of the Admissions procedure. We also maintain records of this data in an anonymised format

solely for the purposes stated in this policy.

- 9.2. Review:** The Deputy Head Pastoral is responsible for the ongoing monitoring and regular analysis of the data monitored above and below and will arrange for the taking of appropriate positive steps to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination where necessary. The DH Pastoral is also responsible for reviewing whether the aims of this Policy are carried out throughout all areas of the school and taking appropriate action where necessary. This policy is reviewed annually by the DH Pastoral. Recommendations for any amendments are reported to the Governors in the Safeguarding Committee meeting.

## 10. Reporting and recording incidents of discrimination

- 10.1. Questions about this policy:** If you are involved in management, or if you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Headteacher.
- 10.2. Complaints:** If you believe that you have received less favourable treatment on any of the unlawful grounds listed above, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to your detriment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the school's formal Complaint's Procedure. For a copy of the School's Policy on the handling of concerns and complaints received from Parents and Pupils aged over 16 years, please see the School Website or request a paper copy from the Bursary. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the complaints procedure.
- 10.3. Reports:** If you would like to report a breach of this policy that does not constitute a complaint as outlined above, please contact the Headteacher.
- 10.4. Enforcement:** We will treat seriously and investigate urgently every complaint and report. The School will always take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy. Disciplinary action may be taken against any member of the School Community who is found to have acted in contravention of this policy.
- 10.5. Record:** All reported breaches of this policy will be recorded and this record will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher.

## 11. Publication

- 11.1.** This policy will be available on the school's website and on request from the Bursar.