



St Mary's School  
CAMBRIDGE

# Equal Opportunities Policy for Students

*This policy is the responsibility of the SEND Committee.*

*Last review: May 25*

*Next review: May 26*

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Promoting equity of opportunity is fundamental to the aims and ethos of St Mary's School, Cambridge ("the School").

The School recognises the benefits of having a diverse School Community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Students will be taught to value and respect others. The School is committed to being an 'equal opportunities' school and is committed to providing an equitable experience for all students, regardless of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or maternity ("protected characteristics").

## Aims

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

- Communicate the School's commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities for its students.
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics.
- Promote equitable experiences for all students of the School community.
- Create and maintain an open and supportive environment, free from discrimination.
- Foster mutual respect and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the School.
- Comply with the School's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010..
- Remove or support students to overcome barriers students where they already exist
- Enforce that all discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

All students of the School community are expected to comply with this policy and treat others with dignity and respect at all times.

All parents are expected to support the aims of this policy and the School's ethos.

Staff at the School, particularly those working at a management level, have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of the School with regard to equal opportunities.

## Regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared to meet the School's obligations under the:

- Equality Act 2010.
- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2024.
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This policy has regard to the following statutory guidance and advice:

- Equality Act 2010 explanatory notes.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical Guidance for Schools in England (2023).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Admissions Policy.
- Behaviour Management Policy.
- Anti-bullying Policy.
- Discipline and Exclusions Policy.
- Accessibility Plan.
- Anti-harassment Policy.
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Policy.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Complaints Policy.
- Recruitment and Selection Policy.

## Admissions

The School treats every application for admission in a fair, open-minded and equitable way in accordance with this policy and the School's Admissions Policy. Although an academically selective School, each application will be considered on its merits in accordance with the School's selection criteria based on an applicant's ability and aptitude. The School's aim is to encourage applications from prospective students with as diverse a range of background as possible. The School is committed to providing equitable experiences for all and as such accepts applications from, and admits, all prospective students irrespective of their sex, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnicity, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief), social background or special educational needs ("SEN").

Please see the Recruitment and Selection Policy in relation to our approach to staff recruitment and selection.

The School does not unlawfully discriminate in any way regarding entry. The School welcomes students with disabilities and/or special education needs, provided that they can be provided with the reasonable adjustments that they require. Parents must inform the School when submitting the Registration Form of any disabilities and/or special education needs which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and/or ability to fully participate in the education provided by the School so that we can consider what reasonable adjustments may be necessary to ensure that the child is not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other student students of the same age. The School will not offer a place to a potential student with disabilities if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the School feels that it cannot adequately meet their needs, that the prospective student is not going to be able to meaningfully access the education offered, or that their health and safety, or those of other student students or staff, may be put at risk.

Bursaries are means tested awards offered to those who meet the School's admission criteria but may otherwise be unable to attend the School due to financial hardship. Details of our provision for bursaries can be found on our website or obtained from the bursar.

## Educational services

The School affords all student students access to educational provision including all benefits, services, and facilities, irrespective of any protected characteristic (subject to our reasonable adjustments duty and considerations of safety and welfare). The School will not discriminate against a student on the grounds of any protected characteristic by directly or indirectly excluding them, or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The School will:

- Treat all student students of the School community with respect and dignity, and seek to provide a positive working and learning environment free from discrimination.
- Endeavour to meet the needs of all students and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics.
- Monitor the admission and progress of students from different backgrounds.
- Challenge inappropriate and unacceptable discriminatory behaviour by students and staff.

- Encourage students to work and play freely, and have respect for all other students irrespective of any protected characteristic.
- Offer all students access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of extra-curricular activities.
- Work with parents and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in School.
- Ensure that it reviews, monitors, and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices.
- Use the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE to:
  - Promote respect for each other, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
  - Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
  - Encourage students to question and challenge assumptions and stereotypes in order to better understand discriminatory behaviours and bias.

The School recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability whether or not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms (including cyberbullying,) is unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies. The School's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies make clear the seriousness of bullying, victimisation and harassment and that appropriate sanctions will be applied to any student who displays inappropriate behaviour.

## Religious belief

Although the School's religious ethos is based on Catholic values and tradition, the School is inclusive and welcomes and respects the rights and freedoms of individuals from other religions and faiths (or with no religion or faith,) subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the rights and freedoms of other members of the School community.

The governing body, through the senior leadership team, actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn to School, parents are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Head, in advance.

## Reasonable adjustments for students with disability

The School is committed to treating all students fairly and in light of the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the School will seek to ensure that students are not put at a substantial disadvantage, by comparison with students who are not disabled. As such, the School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability which includes:

1. making reasonable adjustments to our policies, criteria and practices (i.e. the way the School does things); and
2. providing auxiliary aids and services (i.e. provision of additional support or assistance).

Where the School is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, it will consult with parents and, where appropriate, the student, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator "SENCo" / Head of

Learning Support, and (with the parents' consent) any appropriate third party, which may include for example, a medical practitioner or educational psychologist. The School will discuss what reasonable adjustments, if any, the School is able to make to avoid their child being put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other students. The School will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a student's disability and the resources available to the School. Further information on the School's reasonable adjustments duty can be found in the School's SEN and Disability Policy.

The School is not required to provide auxiliary aids for personal purposes unconnected with its provision of education and services.

The School has an Accessibility Plan in place which can be found on the School website and a hard copy can be made available upon request. This sets out the School's plan to increase the extent to which disabled students can participate in the School's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the School for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled students are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School; and improve the delivery of information to disabled students which is readily accessible to students who are not disabled.

## Monitoring and review

The Head of Learning Support/SENCo regularly monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy and reports to the governors on the policy's effectiveness in practice.

## Breaches of this policy

Students who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's Behaviour Management Policy.

If you believe that a student has received a less favourable experience as a result of a protected characteristic, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to a student's detriment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the School's complaints procedure (available from the website).

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