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

Promoting equal opportunities 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. Pupils will be taught to value and respect others. The School is committed to being an equal opportunities school and is committed to equal treatment for all pupils, 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 pupils
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics
- Promote equal treatment for all members of the School community
- Create and maintain an open and supportive environment, free from discrimination
- Foster mutual tolerance 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 help to overcome barriers for pupils where they already exist
- Enforce that all discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic is unacceptable and will not be tolerated

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

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

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 2025
- 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.
- 2025

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Discipline and Exclusions Policy
- Accessibility Plans
- SEND Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Recruitment, Selection and Disclosure Policy

Admissions

The School treats every application for admission in a fair, open-minded and equal 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 pupils with as diverse a range of background as possible. The School is committed to equal treatment for all and as such accepts applications from, and admits, all prospective pupils 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 pupils with disabilities and/or special education needs, provided we can offer them any support that they require, cater for any additional needs and that our site can accommodate them. 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 children. The School will not offer a place to a child with disabilities if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the School feels that they cannot adequately cater or meet their needs, that the prospective pupil is not going to be able to meaningfully access the education offered, or that their health and safety, or those of other pupils 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 pupils 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 pupil on the grounds of any protected characteristic by excluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The School will:

- Treat all members 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 pupils and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics
- Ensure that pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with an Education Health Care Plan receive necessary educational and welfare support
- Monitor the admission and progress of pupils from different backgrounds
- Challenge inappropriate and unacceptable discriminatory behaviour by pupils and staff
- Encourage pupils to work and play freely and have respect for all other pupils irrespective of any protected characteristic
- Offer all pupils 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:

o Promote tolerance of and respect for each other, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

o Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.

o Encourage pupils 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 pupil 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 and tolerance 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 pupils with disability

The School is committed to treating all pupils fairly and in light of the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the School will seek to ensure that pupils are not put at a substantial disadvantage, by comparison with pupils who are not disabled. As such, the School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils 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 pupil, 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 pupils. The School will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a pupil'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 remove or alter physical features to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils or prospective pupils. Similarly, 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 pupils can participate in the School's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the School for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils 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 pupils which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Monitoring and review

The SEND Coordinator 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

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

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