



Equality Policy

THIS POLICY SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION 2025

THESE CAN BE FOUND ON THE SCHOOL WEBSITE HERE:

<https://www.stedmunds.org.uk/about-us/policies-inspection-reports/>

Context

This policy accords with national legislation and is a general statement of the school's commitment to Equal Opportunities.

St Edmund's School is committed to providing a learning and working environment in which every member of our community is treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. We celebrate diversity and actively promote equality of opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents, and visitors, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

We recognise our duty under the Independent School Standards to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Our approach is proactive, seeking not only to remove barriers but also to create a culture where diversity is valued and inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life.

This policy applies to every aspect of our school community, including teaching and learning, admissions, pastoral care, extracurricular provision, staff recruitment and professional development, and the management of school facilities. It informs our decision-making, curriculum design, and interactions with pupils, staff, parents, and the wider community. It applies to pupils, staff, governors, parents and visitors.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our policies, practices, and outcomes to ensure that they remain effective and reflect both the spirit and the letter of the law. Through this commitment, we aim to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain, fostering mutual respect and understanding in a diverse society.

Aims

St Edmund's School recognises that direct and indirect discrimination might take place and therefore sees the need for a positive and effective Equality policy.

- We will promote the concept of equality of opportunity throughout the School, 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;
- We will enable pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour and relationships with others.
- We will promote a culture whereby individuals are not discriminated against in any way. In the provision of equal opportunities, the School recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination on the basis of: sex, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, disability, religion or belief (including lack of religion or belief), sexual orientation, (in the case of adult members of the School Community) marital or civil partnership status; and age. These are called the "Protected Characteristics". The School also opposes all bullying and unlawful discrimination on the basis that a person has a special educational need (SEN) or learning difficulty, or because English is an additional language.
- We will actively and consistently promote anti-racism within the school. We recognise we have an important role to play in sending a message that racism in all its forms can never be tolerated.

The Legal Background

Relevant Legislation and Guidance

Primary Legislation

Equality Act 2010

Human Rights Act 1998

Children Act 1989

Children Act 2004

Education Act 2002 (Section 175) – places duties on governing bodies to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA)

Equal Pay Act 1970

Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986

Race Relations Act 1976

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Race Relations Act 1976 (General Statutory Duty: Code of Practice)

Employment Rights Act 1996

Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983

Employment Relations Act 1999

Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000

The Statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality

Secondary Legislation / Regulations

The Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 (ISSRs)

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017

Statutory Guidance

SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 Years (DfE & DoH, January 2015)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE, 2025)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest edition)

Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (latest edition)

Non-Statutory Guidance / Supporting Frameworks

DfE: Equality Act 2010 – Advice for Schools (latest edition)

Ofsted: Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years, Education and Skills

British Values Guidance (DfE)

The main provisions covering discrimination are the following:

The school's values, aims and objectives all accord with equal treatment of people promoted by these laws and regulations, and the rights enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998.

"Provisions within the Equality Act allow schools and colleges to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils or students with certain protected characteristics in order to meet their specific need. A school or college, could, for example, consider taking positive action to support girls if there was evidence that they were being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment. There is also a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people." (KCSIE 2025)

Key Definitions

"Equality" ensures that everyone has equal rights and equal opportunities, regardless of diverse characteristics. Equality of opportunity has a legal framework to ensure protected groups are not discriminated against.

"Inclusion" is the culture in which a diverse mix of people can come to work or school, feel comfortable and confident to be themselves, work and learn in a way that enables them and delivers professional / educational needs. Inclusion aims to ensure that everyone feels valued and accepted.

"Equity" relates to equality, and covers provision of the means – often varied, reflecting diverse needs – for people to move towards equal and just outcomes.

"Diversity" is about recognising and valuing difference, where everyone is respected for who they are.

"Gender" (Sex) as a Protected Characteristic: Under the Equality Act 2010, sex—the statutory protected characteristic—has now been formally interpreted by the UK Supreme Court to mean biological sex at birth, with "woman" and "man" referring specifically to those assigned female or male at birth, respectively. Notably, the judgment clarifies that gender recognition certificates (GRCs) do not alter legal sex for the purposes of the Equality Act: a transgender person's legal sex under the Act remains their sex recorded at birth. However, the Court reaffirmed that transgender individuals remain fully protected under the separate characteristic of gender reassignment, preserving their right to protection from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation as set out in the Act. This distinction between biological sex and gender reassignment must be carefully reflected in policy language and implementation, particularly in contexts involving single-sex spaces, services, and activities. The policy must therefore strive for clarity and fairness—recognising that while sex-based

protections apply only to biological sex, transgender individuals continue to enjoy robust legal safeguards under their own specific protected characteristic.

We are committed to the principle of equal opportunities that opposes discrimination on the basis of the following protected characteristics:

- sex
- sexual orientation
- marital or civil partnership status
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or beliefs
- pregnancy and maternity
- disability
- age

We will take all reasonable steps within our power to ensure that all members of the community are treated equally and fairly.

Responsibilities

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

The Head has responsibility for the equal opportunities policy, and for delegating responsibilities and tasks to other staff including the Head of the Junior School and the Head of the Pre-Prep School, and for ensuring that the policy is known and understood by staff, pupils and parents. The Head provides a report to Governors on the implementation of the policy at least annually.

The Head, Head of the Junior School and Head of Pre-Prep may be asked to present general reports, statistics and incident reports to the Governing Body and its committees as agreed from time to time. The Deputy Head (Academic) in the Senior School, the Director of Studies in the Junior School and the Head of the Pre-Prep in the Pre-Prep School are responsible for ensuring equal opportunities in the curriculum.

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

Staff

The School is fully committed to a policy of treating all of its staff and job applicants equally. The School will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment and selection, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy and dismissal.

Appointments

- The School adheres to the Equality Act 2010 in all areas of employment including recruitment, training, disciplinary and capability proceedings and exiting from the School whether through resignation, redundancy or retirement.

- Advertisements will aim to positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, the School will, as far as reasonably practicable:
 - Ensure advertisements are not confined to those areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants with a particular protected characteristic.
 - Avoid setting any unnecessary provisions or criteria which would exclude a higher proportion of applicants with a particular protected characteristic.
- Application forms for jobs will include a question about Equal Opportunities – or interview questions will do so;
- People with disabilities will be offered opportunities at interview to enable them to demonstrate their suitability for employment;
- All reasonable steps to employ individuals on the basis of their experience, abilities and qualifications without regard to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- However, where, having regard to the nature and context of the work, having a particular protected characteristic is an occupational requirement and that occupational requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, the School will apply that requirement to the job role and this may therefore be specified in the advertisement.
- The School will keep confidential information about the gender, ethnic background, disability and age of candidates for appointments;
- The Head will be prepared to inform the Governing Body's Education and Staffing Committee of such information as is relevant and/or requested.

Staff Development

- All employees will, as far as possible, have equal access to training, career development and promotion;
- All recruits to the organisation will be offered induction training which will include 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, and in particular those concerned with selection and promotion, are given equal opportunity awareness training;
- Members of staff who become disabled while in employment will be given positive help to retain their jobs or to be considered for redeployment if that is necessary according to the School's Capability policy.

Staff Conduct

- All staff are expected to take responsibility for understanding and complying with school policies relating to equality of opportunity, inclusion, access and bullying and abide by the Staff Code of Conduct.
- The School is committed to ensuring all staff, at all levels, are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect, and work in an environment free from unfair treatment, harassment, discrimination or intimidation.
- Where staff come across incidents involving prejudice based bullying, they must report these to the appropriate senior member of staff;
- These incidents will then be investigated in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy, the Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Policy and the Safeguarding Policy. The School will seek and

follow advice from external agencies such as Kent Children's Service and the Police where necessary.

- The Education and Staffing Committee of the Governing Body will monitor at least once per term any incidents and actions taken of prejudice based bullying;
- All incidents of prejudice based among pupils will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. All such incidents will be reported to the appropriate senior member of staff.

Equal pay and equality of terms

- The School is committed to equal pay and equality of terms in employment. It believes its male and female employees should receive equal pay where they are carrying out like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value.
- A pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria will be maintained

Administration

- Venues for meetings will take account of the needs of all participants;
- Venues for teaching and learning will take into account the particular needs of the learners and teacher/TA.

Documents

- Language used in documents will reflect and promote equal opportunities and font style and size will take account of the full range of readers;
- Access to documentation will include alternative formats as required.

Reports to the Police

- Incidents that involve racist elements which need to be reported to the Police will be reported via the school's Police Liaison Officer.

Disability

- The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.
- It is unlawful discrimination for an employer to treat a person less favourably than others for a reason relating to disability.
- Under the Act the School is required to take 'reasonable steps' to ensure that we do not discriminate against anyone who would like to apply to work, or currently work for the School.
- If an individual becomes disabled during their career at the School, the School will work to make reasonable adjustments to enable the individual to stay. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis and in a sensitive and supportive manner.

The School will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions and staff and pay practices and procedures in order to assess whether equal opportunity is being achieved. This will also involve considering any possible indirectly discriminatory effects of its working practices. If changes are required, the School will implement them. The School will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome substantial disadvantages caused by disability.

Reporting complaints

- All allegations of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The Company will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints of unlawful discrimination from staff
- If you wish to make a complaint of discrimination, you should do so promptly and use the School's grievance procedure.
- Pupils may speak with a trusted adult in school. This may include any member of teaching staff or pupils can go directly to the School's Pastoral Team.
- Staff should feel able to seek support from their Head of Department, Deputy Heads, or the Head of HR.

Pupils

Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment

- The school strives to ensure that there is no bias or discrimination within the curriculum or its delivery. The school curriculum policy sets out this requirement and the Executive Group, Senior Leaders and Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring the policy is correctly implemented
- Pupils have equal access to the curriculum programmes of study throughout their time at the school and to non-compulsory courses according to aptitude and ability
- All subject teachers will be aware of equal opportunity and explicit references will be made within schemes of work where appropriate; school and departmental development plans will act to improve the learning of pupils according to this analysis
- The school is committed to educational inclusion as outlined by its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Whole School Policy
- The school will make reasonable adjustments to any disabled children who would like to apply to study or currently study at St Edmund's

Monitoring & Assessment

- The School monitors the individual needs of pupils as they progress through school by means of academic tracking, meetings with relevant staff and parents, communication with staff and, where necessary, the involvement of external agencies.
- The Deputy Head (Academic) will make and record figures on take-up of courses which will be presented to the Head annually, or more often as requested. The Head will keep Governors informed;
- Annual analysis of attainment, behaviour and other pupil data will be undertaken by gender, ethnic background and ability
- The School has established a pupil-led Diversity Group which meets regularly to discuss whole school issues and initiatives.

Pupil Conduct

- The School is committed to ensuring a safe, secure and supportive environment for all its pupils
- School rules and the Code of Conduct for pupils clearly and explicitly forbid the verbalisation or vocalisation of discrimination on the grounds of race, culture, religion, gender, age, sexuality and ability/disability.
- All staff are vigilant in recognising verbal and physical forms of harassment, prejudice and stereotyping, and particular issues are addressed in staff meetings and INSETS.
- Positive attitudes and awareness development for equality of opportunity is specifically taught through the PSHEE and tutorial programmes.

Other relevant policies:

Accessibility Plan
Admissions
Anti-Bullying
Behaviour Management
Curriculum
First Aid
Health & Safety
PSHEE
Pupil Code of Conduct
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
Staff Code of Conduct
Safeguarding & E Safety

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed each year (or more often if necessary), and improved and developed as appropriate within the Governors' policy review schedule.

1. September 2019 EOC
2. September 2020 EOC
3. September 2021 EOC
4. September 2022 EOC
5. September 2023 EOC
6. September 2024 EOC
7. September 2025 EOC

Signed: _____
Chairman of Governors

Date: _____

Review Date: September 2026