

Heathfield Knoll School

Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy is supported and complemented by the following policies:

- Accessibility
- Admissions
- Anti-Bullying
- Anti-Racism
- Behaviour, Discipline & Exclusions
- CEIAG
- Curriculum
- First Aid
- Flexible Working
- Online Safety
- Preventing Extremism & Radicalisation
- PSHE
- Recruitment
- Retirement
- SEND
- Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct

Key personnel:

Headteacher	DDSL	Lawrence Collins
Deputy Headteacher	DDSL	Emma White

This document is reviewed at least annually by L.Collins, Headteacher or as events change or legislation requires. This is then approved by the Governing Board.

The Governors have the skills to support and advise the school in its decision making.

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Next review due: August 2025

Contents



1. Education	3
2. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)	3
3. Religion	4
4. Admissions	4
5. Gender Fluidity	5
6. Awareness and Training	5
7. Outside Agencies	5
8. Employees	5
9. Who is Responsible for this Policy?	6
10. Discrimination	7
11. Recruitment and Selection	8
12. Training, Promotion and Conditions of Service	9
13. Termination of Employment	9
14. Disabilities	10
15. Part-Time and Fixed-Term Work	10
16. Breaches of this Policy	10
17. Amendments to this Policy	11

1. Education

The school is mainstream and English-speaking. The language of curriculum delivery is English; therefore, we require all teachers to be fluent in English, as it is the language of instruction. We provide additional support for pupils for whom English is not their first language, tailored to their individual needs.

We provide assistance to pupils with a range of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs, also referred to as neurodiversities) through Learning Support, Intervention, and, initially, Quality First Teaching. We are committed to ensuring that all pupils in our care, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, are included, valued, and supported, and that reasonable adjustments are made for them.

2. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

All school documents demonstrate our commitment to equal opportunities. In line with the EYFS statutory framework at Heathfield Knoll School, we foster positive attitudes towards diversity and difference, ensuring that every child is included and all children learn to value diversity in others, ultimately growing up to make a positive contribution to society.

Children with a specific educational need or disability may benefit from a visual timetable, designated areas of the classroom for personal belongings, and support from individual staff members, when and where appropriate. All children access areas of learning in a variety of ways – visual resources are inclusive for all.

The Head of Early Years and the EYFS SENCo work with the school SENCo to ensure, where necessary, that specific needs are met through Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in line with school policy. Children are observed and supported to access all areas of the EYFS curriculum. Through the three Prime Areas of Development – Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED), Physical Development, and Communication and Language – all children can develop independence at their own level.

Every child and member of staff within the EYFS is encouraged to value one another by sharing experiences through photographs and written reports about events taking place outside of school, children's own cultural experiences, and family events. Throughout the year, as part of the EYFS curriculum, children are introduced to themes and festivals associated with various cultures.

Children's Individual Education Plans are formally reviewed on a termly basis with parents and staff. All staff in the EYFS monitor daily the individual needs of children to ensure that their specific needs are met. As part of the daily and weekly planning process, staff include the specific needs of all children.

3. Religion

The school has a Christian ethos and its practices reflect this. It welcomes pupils, families and staff of all religions and beliefs, and respects lawful religious observance and expression. No person will be discriminated against because of religion or belief. The school will address conduct that amounts to unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or harm to others.

4. Admissions

Admission decisions will be made in accordance with the Admissions Policy and objective, transparent criteria. The school will not unlawfully discriminate in admissions because of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Any character or suitability criteria will be clearly defined, relevant to the school's lawful admissions requirements, and applied consistently. Where needed, reasonable adjustments are made during tours, taster days, assessments and other stages of the admissions process.

5. Gender Fluidity

The school recognises that some pupils may question or express their gender identity. Any request for support will be considered sensitively and individually, taking account of the pupil's welfare, safeguarding, privacy, views and maturity, the views of parents or guardians where appropriate, and the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998. Staff should seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher where there are concerns about safety, distress, coercion or family circumstances.

6. Awareness and Training

We recognise the importance of ensuring that employees and pupils are aware of the Equal Opportunities Policy. Awareness is raised and maintained among employees through discussion at staff meetings and forms part of the education programme for pupils (delivered through PSHE lessons and tutor groups).

7. Outside Agencies

Heathfield Knoll School is committed to collaborating with external agencies, including educational psychologists, occupational therapists, and mental health services, to support the school's efforts in meeting the needs of all pupils, parents, and staff.

8. Employees

To promote an environment where the school can draw on the broadest possible range of knowledge, skills, and experience, while ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and codes of practice, we are committed to achieving and maintaining a workforce that reflects the diversity of society.

Employees and job applicants will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. The school also recognises the importance of supporting neurodivergent staff, pupils and applicants, including through reasonable adjustments where the Equality Act 2010 duties apply.

This policy outlines our approach to equal opportunities and the prevention of discrimination in the workplace. It applies to all aspects of employment with us, including recruitment, pay and conditions, training, appraisals, promotion, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

This policy applies to all employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and agency workers.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

9. Who is Responsible for this Policy?

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law.

All staff must:

- Set an appropriate standard of behaviour,
- Lead by example, and
- Ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives regarding equal opportunities.

Managers will receive appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness, recruitment, and best practices in selection.

If you are involved in management or recruitment, or if you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Headteacher to request training or further information.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest improvements by contacting the Headteacher.

10. Discrimination

You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people, including current and former employees, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies:

- in the workplace,
- outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts, or when wearing a work uniform), and
- on work-related trips or events, including social events.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

(a) Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic (e.g. rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay).

(b) Indirect discrimination: applying a provision, criterion or practice that appears neutral but disadvantages people with a particular Protected Characteristic, and cannot be justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time may disadvantage women due to childcare commitments.

(c) Harassment: including sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Harassment is addressed further in our Anti-Bullying Policy.

(d) Victimisation: retaliating against someone who has complained about, or supported another's complaint about, discrimination or harassment.

(e) Disability discrimination: including direct and indirect discrimination, unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments.

11. Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment, promotion, and other selection exercises (such as redundancy selection) will be conducted based on merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination.

- More than one person will typically conduct shortlisting, and, where possible, with the involvement of a Governor.
- Recruitment procedures are regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are treated fairly and equally.
- Vacancies are advertised to a wide and diverse section of the labour market. Advertisements avoid stereotyping or discouraging wording and include a short equal opportunities statement.

Where appropriate, lawful exemptions may apply (e.g. when a job can only be undertaken by a woman). These exemptions will always be clearly specified in the advertisement.

Job applicants must not be asked questions that suggest discriminatory intent (e.g., pregnancy or childcare plans). Health or disability questions must not be asked before a job offer, except where:

- necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an essential part of the role (subject to reasonable adjustments),
- to establish fitness for interview/assessment and reasonable adjustments needed,
- for positive action in recruiting disabled persons, or
- for equal opportunities monitoring (kept separate from decision-making).

By law, all employees must have the right to work in the UK. Proof of status must be verified through original documents, regardless of nationality.

Monitoring of recruitment data (including gender, ethnicity, disability, etc.) is undertaken to help identify underrepresented groups and inform practice improvements. Data is anonymised and does not affect recruitment outcomes.

12. Training, Promotion and Conditions of Service

- Training needs will be identified through regular appraisals.
- All staff will be given fair access to training and development opportunities.
- Promotions will be based on merit.
- Workforce composition and promotions will be monitored to ensure equal opportunities.
- Conditions of service, benefits and facilities are regularly reviewed to ensure equal access and eliminate barriers.

13. Termination of Employment

- Redundancy criteria and procedures will be fair, objective and free from discrimination.
- Disciplinary procedures and outcomes will be applied consistently and without bias.

14. Disabilities

Subject to the physical constraints of our buildings, we welcome applications for employment, school places, or advisory roles from people with a disability under the Equality Act 2010.

The school will comply with its duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, staff, applicants and visitors. Adjustments will be considered individually and may include changes to policies, practices, procedures, communication methods, auxiliary aids, services and access arrangements. The school will keep adjustments under review and will explain, where an adjustment is not reasonable or cannot be implemented, the reasons and any alternative support available. We will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabilities, where possible.

The physical features of the premises will be monitored, and steps will be taken to improve accessibility where feasible. Accessibility plans are available from the school office.

Due to the age and layout of some of our buildings, full accessibility for all may not always be achievable. Nevertheless, the school will make every reasonable effort to support individuals.

15. Part-Time and Fixed-Term Work

Part-time and fixed-term staff will be treated no less favourably than comparable full-time or permanent staff (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment can be objectively justified.

16. Breaches of this Policy

- Breaches of this policy will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.
- Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct, leading to dismissal (for staff) or permanent exclusion (for pupils).
- Pupils, parents, and guardians may raise concerns through the Complaints Procedure (available on the website or from the school office).

There must be no victimisation of staff, parents or pupils who raise concerns in good faith. False allegations made deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct.

17. Amendments to this Policy

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher and may be amended at any time to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, or school requirements.

Aug 22	Changes staffing	L.Collins
Aug 23	Update - staff changes	L.Collins
Mar 24	Changes Local Advisory Board to Governors	T.Stooksbury
July 24	Minor edits to reflect changes in staff	L. Collins
August 25	Minor updates	L. Collins
Nov 25	Updated reference to neurodivergent staff/pupils/applicants	L. Collins
Aug 26	Improved wording to enable clearer interpretation	L. Collins