



Highlands

School & Sixth Form

Equal Opportunities Policy

APPROVED

Date of Last Review	September 2023
Next Review Due	September 2025
Governors Committee	School standards and performance

Contents

1. Equality objectives statement	2
1.1 Rationale	2
1.2 Vision statement and school values	2
1.3 Aims and objectives	2
1.4 Legal Requirements	3
1.5 Eliminating discrimination	5
1.6 Advancing equality of opportunity	5
1.7 Fostering good relations	5
1.8 Equalities objectives	5
1.9 Highlands School’s equality objectives 2022-24	5
1.10 Equality considerations in decision-making	6
2. Roles and responsibilities	6
2.1 Specific Responsibilities	6
2.2 The senior leadership team will	7
3. The Curriculum	8
4. Monitoring and review	9
4.1 Monitoring, review and training	9
4.2 Development & training	9
Appendices	11
Appendix 1: Definitions of each protected characteristic	11

1. Equality objectives statement

September 2023- July 2025

1.1 Rationale

At Highlands School equality of opportunity is central to our school ethos and values. We expect all students and staff to challenge and act upon racism, sexism, homophobia and all other forms of prejudice and discrimination, including bullying and harassment. We are proactive in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, through policy, assemblies and the curriculum and through developing our students' character and values.

1.2 Vision statement and school values

Highlands School is a community school where every student and colleague is nurtured to be the very best they can be. Our values and ethos are clear and tangible from the moment you enter the school, and all members of the school community share our DARE values; determination, aspiration, respect and equality. Being part of Highlands School is based on a shared understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. We are a very diverse community and our diversity is our strength. Every member of our community is included, heard and valued.

We see issues of race, age, gender, sexuality, and disability as being equally important, and inter-related. Equal opportunities means monitoring and evaluating structures within organisations so that all students and staff have equal access and that all employees receive equal consideration. The provision of equal opportunities means that an awareness of these differences is needed by the school in order to ensure that all opportunities are made available and attractive to all staff and students.

Community education is very important to us. We believe that our school is here to serve and support the local community, and that the children of our community deserve the very best. We are committed to being a forward thinking employer with established best practice in ethical recruitment, flexible working and gender equality. Our curriculum celebrates diversity in all its forms and embodies British values. We are a reflective organisation and we are always reviewing our policies and process to ensure they reflect our school ethos and strong equalities focus.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The Governing Body and school, through this Equal Opportunities Policy, aims to do the following.

- Carry out its legal duty in complying with the Equality Act 2010 and public sector duty.
- Ensure that equality remains high on the school's strategic agenda.
- Create a culture where staff and students actively challenge behaviours that do not promote equality in all its forms.

- Recognise that some historic inequalities exist which we aim to rebalance through our systems.
- Establish good people management practices and create a school where equalities are embedded in the school's day-to-day practice.
- Ensure that equal opportunities remain high on the school's strategic agenda.
- Achieve a staffing composition that reflects the wider community.

1.4 Legal Requirements

Our school aims to meet its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is a duty placed on public authorities to consider how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

When public authorities carry out their functions, the Equality Act says they must have due regard or think about the need to:

1. **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation
2. **Advance equality of opportunity** between people with protected characteristics and those who do not
3. **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

We ensure that our school policies and practices reflect The Equality Act 2010. The Act aims to promote a fair and more equal society and to protect our students and colleagues from unfair treatment. The Equality Act defines nine protected characteristics applicable to our students and colleagues.

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion or belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual orientation

The Equality Act states that discrimination of the above protected characteristics can manifest in the following forms

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments
- Discrimination arising from a protected characteristic
- Harassment
- Victimisation

Direct discrimination: this occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see perception discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see discrimination by association below).

Discrimination by association: this is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception discrimination: this is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Indirect discrimination: this can occur where there is a condition, rule, policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Victimisation: this occurs when a person is treated less favorably than other persons would be treated because that person has done a 'protected act' under the Equal Pay Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act or Employment Equality Regulations, for example, by bringing forward proceedings or giving evidence or information.

Harassment: harassment can take many forms, from the most obvious abusive remarks to extremely subtle use of power. As with unfair or unlawful discrimination, harassment can be intentional or unintentional. However, the key issue is not simply the intention of the offender but the impact of the behaviour on the person receiving it. Harassment may involve any of the following:

- physical contact or violence;
- offensive humiliating and intimidating remarks or actions;
- exclusion from participation in job-related or classroom-related discussions, training or social or other events;
- unfair work allocation;
- unjust or excessive or humiliating criticism of performance;
- offensive signs or notices;
- repeated demands or requests for sexual favours.

These are examples and not an exhaustive list. Whatever the form, the school will provide support for any member of the school community, pupil or staff member who is the victim of any form of discrimination or harassment.

At Highlands we take an intersectional approach to equal opportunities, ensuring that we are mindful that colleagues and students have multi-layered identities. This might mean that some staff and students may identify with more than one protected characteristic.

1.5 Eliminating discrimination

- New staff receive training on the Equality Act as part of their induction, and all staff receive refresher training every September.
- The school has a designated member of the senior leadership team responsible for leading the schools equality, diversity and inclusion strategy who works closely with school governors on the EDI strategy and action plan.
- Questions on EDI are asked of all staff during recruitment interviews, not only to assess the candidates understanding of equality but also to ensure mission alignment and to demonstrate the school's commitment to EDI.

1.6 Advancing equality of opportunity

As set out in the DfE guidance on the Equality Act, the school aims to advance equality of opportunity by:

- Removing or minimising challenges and disadvantages connected to specific protected characteristics (e.g. students and staff with disabilities, non-bi).
- Taking steps to meet the particular needs of staff and students who have a particular characteristic (e.g. enabling Muslim students to pray at prescribed times).

1.7 Fostering good relations

The school aims to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it through the following.

- Promoting acceptance, inclusion and understanding of a range of religions and cultures through different aspects of our curriculum. This includes teaching in RS, citizenship and PSHE, but also activities in other curriculum areas. For example, as part of teaching and learning in English/reading, students will be introduced to literature from a range of cultures.
- Assemblies dealing with relevant social, moral and cultural issues.
- Our school council has representatives from different year groups and is formed of students from a range of backgrounds.
- House captains leading key areas of school improvement and representing our houses.

1.8 Equalities objectives

As part of the school's public sector duty and aims to foster good relations between people with protected characteristics, at least every two years we will publish equality objectives.

1.9 Highlands School's equality objectives 2022-24

- 1) Be proactive in eliminating all forms of discrimination and discriminatory language eg. sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic and disability language. This will be achieved through the curriculum, adherence to the school's values which inextricably link to fundamental British values, and policies.

- 2) Continue to ensure that our disability provision for students with special educational needs and social, emotional and mental health enables them to participate in all aspects of school life, and to make academic progress in-line with their starting points.
- 3) Close the gaps in academic progress of student groups (specifically Black Caribbean students).

1.10 Equality considerations in decision-making

- The school ensures it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made and new policies are introduced.
- The school always considers the impact of significant decisions on particular groups. For example, when a school trip or activity is being planned, the school considers whether the trip:
 - Cuts across any religious holidays
 - Is accessible to students with disabilities
 - Has equivalent facilities for boys and girls

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Specific Responsibilities

All members of the school community are responsible for promoting the school's Equal Opportunities Policy and are obliged to respect and act in accordance with the policy. We aim to empower our students to make informed choices so that they are better prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life within their community. Equality of opportunity cannot be realised without the involvement and commitment of all members of the school community and a common understanding of the pivotal role of equal opportunities in the context of the school's ethos and values, in particular, the recognition that the role of all staff is crucial in the delivery of the objectives of this policy.

Responsibilities of all stakeholders (including students)

- Embody the school's ethos in values in their professional and personal conduct.
- Develop and demonstrate respect for the culture, language and religious beliefs of all other people in the school.
- Develop and demonstrate respect and understanding for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Develop and demonstrate respect for people of all abilities and disabilities.
- Challenge and report discrimination and prejudice.
- Only use positive language, ensuring that racist, sexist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic language or any other discriminatory language is never used.
- Celebrate and promote diversity, equality and inclusion in all its forms.
- Participate in activities that promote equality and diversity.

2.2 The senior leadership team will

- Oversee the effective implementation of the policy. A deputy headteacher will have specific responsibility for the school's equal opportunities work.
- Ensure that all reports of discrimination are taken seriously, recorded and fully investigated.
- Role model equalities best practice at all times.
- Ensure that all incidents, reports or allegations in relations to equalities matters are followed up in accordance with the school's grievances/complaints procedure/behaviour policy/staff code of conduct policy.
- Ensure that equal opportunities factored into the school improvement plan, with key performance indicators to measure outcomes.
- Monitor progress data to ensure that all groups of students are making progress.
- Be aware of gaps in progress data that could indicate an equal opportunity and act accordingly to close these gaps.
- Be aware of where equalities gaps exist in wider school practice and systems. Through the school improvement plan, actively work to address these gaps.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's curriculum in developing and maintaining equal opportunities.
- Ensure that subjects and activities, which specifically promote community cohesion, interfaith dialogue and human rights, remain important aspects of the school's curriculum (eg. Religious studies, citizenship, PSHE and wider SMSC).
- Ensure that all subjects/departments understand the role their subject plays in promoting equal opportunities and that each subject factors this into their department improvement plan.
- Support and hold middle leaders to account to ensure that equal opportunities are high profile across all departments, year groups and support staff teams.
- Ensure that class groupings promote equal opportunities and do not disadvantage any specific group of students.
- Ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement this equal opportunities policy.
- Keep up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it.
- Keep up to date with best practice in equal opportunities within educational settings.

The governing body will:

- Ensure that the objectives arising from the policy are part of the School Improvement Plan.
- Support the headteacher and the senior leadership team in implementing the policy.
- Evaluate and review the policy every two years and the equality objectives every two years.

Students will:

- Be involved in the further development of the policy and objectives, through the student council.
- Be taught how to report discrimination to a member of staff.
- Receive equalities training through assemblies, citizenship & PSHE lessons.
- Be encouraged to actively support the ethos policy and will be expected to act in accordance with it.

Parents and carers will:

- Be encouraged to actively support this policy.
- Reinforce the school's aims in fostering mutual understanding and respect between people with protected characteristics.
- Support the school's aims and ethos in all aspects.
- Show respect for all staff.

All school staff will:

- Be made fully aware of the policy.
- Reinforce the school's aims in fostering mutual understanding and respect between people with protected characteristics.
- Be trained on matters of equal opportunities.
- Be involved in the further development of the policy and objectives.
- Be required to actively support the policy and expected to act in accordance with it.
- Be encouraged to make known any queries or training requirements.

Teachers will:

- Ensure that their teaching practice does not disadvantage any students.
- Be aware of how the protected characteristics might impact on students' access to the lesson, lesson materials and resources.
- Ensure that classroom and corridor displays promote equality and diversity in all its forms.
- Reinforce the school's equal opportunities policy in the classroom.
- Monitor the progress of groups of specific groups of students and intervene/act to close these gaps.

3. The Curriculum

Highlands School is committed to ensuring that diversity is an integral part of our curriculum. The Education Reform Act 1988 states that 'the school curriculum should reflect the culturally diverse society to which students belong and of which they will become adult members'. Students should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, which does the following.

- Challenges and avoids stereotypes and provides good role models for all students. Equality of opportunity informs the whole of the curriculum and is reviewed regularly.
- Incorporates equal opportunities into lesson planning.
- Reflects true picture of the world and its history, in particular an understanding of the political, social and economic reasons for racism and inequality, and the ways in which racism and sexism is transmitted.
- Represents fairly and accurately, the contributions of all civilisations and sections of society.
- Encourages students to question and evaluate information, recognise bias and seek alternative sources.
- Is relevant to all students, meets their needs and motivates them to be aspirational.
- Acts as a force for developing and reinforcing a school ethos, which maintains respect for all members of the community.
- Images, displays and teaching materials should reflect a positive and diverse representation of the protected characteristics.

- Option choices, work experience and careers guidance are monitored to ensure fairness in these processes. Where concerning patterns in terms of ethnic background, gender or disability emerge, we endeavour to ensure these concerns are eliminated.
- Uses setting where the headteacher has agreed with the head of department a clear rationale and purpose for setting. Where there is setting, this will be closely monitored.

4. Monitoring and review

4.1 Monitoring, review and training

Governors have a duty to ensure that policies are regularly monitored and reviewed. Senior leaders will monitor the following aspects of the school in relation to equal opportunities.

Staff

- Composition of the school staff.
- Recruitment trends.
- Patterns of promotion.
- Take-up of family-friendly policies, e.g. flexible working arrangements.

Students

- Composition of the student intake.
- Sanctions and achievements.
- Option choices.
- Further and higher educational choices.

The effectiveness of this policy will also be evaluated through the following:

- Staff feedback through focus groups and stakeholder surveys.
- Our School Improvement Plan.

4.2 Development & training

At Highlands School we aim to develop a shared understanding and mutual respect for all protected characteristics through a training programme that enables staff to learn and raise questions in a safe and non-judgemental space. This will be done through presentations, guidance documents, policy training and small group workshops. This approach can be summarised in the following stages.

- **Share our school's equalities objectives** which are underpinned by the Equality Act and our public sector equality duty.
- **Raise awareness** about various protected characteristics and different combinations of protected characteristics.
- **Through dialogue, develop a shared knowledge base** of issues related to the protected characteristics.
- **Collaboratively develop a whole school strategy** which aims to ensure all members of our staff community feel valued and secure regardless of race or gender

In the academic year 2022-23, we have committed to focussing our equal opportunities training on the following protected characteristics.

- **Sex;** specifically in relation to sexual harassment and the menopause.
- **Race;** specifically in relation to improving the experience of Black and mixed heritage staff and students at our school.
- **Disability;** specifically in relation to understanding how to support deaf staff and colleagues and understanding hidden disabilities.

The success of the Equal Opportunities Policy is closely linked to the provision of relevant training. The school will endeavour to do the following.

- Enhance and develop the skills, knowledge and abilities of existing employees to realise their full potential, irrespective of background or employment status.
- Provide equal access to training and development opportunities for all staff, including part time, on the basis of their training needs.
- Promote a greater awareness of equal opportunities.

4.3 Links to related policies:

- Behaviour policy
- Exclusions policy
- SEND policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Staff code of conduct
- Accessibility Policy

Appendices

Appendix 1: Definitions of each protected characteristic

Protected Characteristic	The Equality Act 2010 says that a person must not be discriminated against because
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● they are (or are not) a certain age or in a certain age group. ● someone thinks they are (or are not) a specific age or age group, this is known as discrimination by perception. ● they are connected to someone of a specific age or age group, this is known as discrimination by association. <p>NB: This does not apply to school aged children.</p>
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● they have a disability. ● someone thinks a person has a disability (this is known as discrimination by perception). ● they are connected to someone with a disability (this is known as discrimination by association).
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● of their gender reassignment. ● someone thinks a person is transgender. ● transgender (this is known as discrimination by association). ● they are connected to a transgender person, or someone wrongly thought to be. ● To be protected from gender reassignment discrimination, a person does not need to have undergone any specific treatment or surgery to change from the sex assigned at birth to their preferred gender. This is because changing one’s physiological or other gender attributes is a personal process and will differ for each individual. ● A person can be at any stage in the transition process – from proposing to reassign their gender, to undergoing a process to reassign their gender, or having completed it. ● Intersex people (the term used to describe a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the typical definitions of female or male) are not explicitly protected from discrimination by the Equality Act, but must not be discriminated against because of their gender or perceived gender.
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● they are pregnant or on maternity leave. ● they are breastfeeding. ● They have a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy. A person is entitled to maternity leave and protection from discrimination in the same way as if they had a live birth. Prior to 24 weeks, the loss of the baby is treated as a miscarriage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They have taken leave as a result of a miscarriage or pregnancy. Sick leave for these reasons should be recorded separately from other types of sick leave so that it is not used to a person’s disadvantage, for example, in disciplinary or redundancy decisions. ● They miscarry before 24 weeks. The person may need time off work if they are ill as a result of a miscarriage. Sickness absence related to a miscarriage should be treated in the same way as pregnancy related sickness. NB: This also covers pregnant students. It is unlawful for school to treat a student less favourably or deny them access to education because of pregnancy, parenting or breastfeeding. Local Authorities are required under section 19 of the Education Act to ensure students are provided with suitable education when absent from school because of pregnancy or parenting.
<p>Race</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● of their colour, or nationality (including citizenship). It can also mean a person’s ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as their current nationality. For example, a person may have Chinese national origins and be living in Britain with a British passport. ● their race or racial identity. ● their racial group is made up of two or more distinct racial groups.
<p>Religion or belief</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● they are (or are not) of a particular religion. ● they hold (or do not hold) a particular philosophical belief ● someone thinks they are of a particular religion or hold a particular belief (this is known as discrimination by perception). ● they are connected to someone who has a religion or belief (this is known as discrimination by association). ● In the Equality Act, religion or belief can mean any religion, for example an organised religion like Christianity, Judaism, Islam or Buddhism, or a smaller religion like Rastafarianism or Paganism, as long as it has a clear structure and belief system. ● The Equality Act also covers non-belief or a lack of religion or belief. ● The Equality Act says that a philosophical belief must be genuinely held and more than an opinion. It must be cogent, serious and apply to an important aspect of human life or behaviour. For example, an employee believes strongly in man-made climate change and feels that they have a duty to live their life in a way which limits their impact on the earth to help save it for future generations: this would be classed as a belief and protected under the Equality Act. ● The Equality Act also says that a belief must also be worthy of respect in a democratic society and not affect other people’s fundamental rights. For example, an employee believes that white people are a superior race to others and tells their colleagues so. This would not be classed as a belief protected under the Equality Act.

<p>Sex (as is in sex assigned at birth)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● they are (or are not) a particular sex. ● someone thinks they are the opposite sex (this is known as discrimination by perception). ● they are connected to someone of a particular sex (this is known as discrimination by association). ● In the Equality Act, sex can mean either male or female, or a group of people such as men or boys, or women or girls.
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● they are heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual. ● someone thinks they have a particular sexual orientation (this is known as discrimination by perception). ● they are connected to someone who has a particular sexual orientation (this is known as discrimination by association). ● In the Equality Act, sexual orientation includes how you choose to express your sexual orientation, such as through your appearance or the places you visit.