

Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy Owner: Marianna Cilia

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Governors' sign off: July 2018

Introduction

Valence School is an inclusive school where we focus on the well-being and progress of every student and where all members of our community are of equal worth. We are committed to fair and equal treatment of all individuals and welcome applications from people to join the school community as pupils, staff and governors.

We believe that the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Valence School is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination or harassment.

Our aim is to recruit, promote and carry out any other employment decision on the basis of merit, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. We also value diversity and recognise the varied contributions that a diverse workforce brings to an organisation; we are committed to drawing on different perspectives and experiences of individuals which will add value to what we do. The School also endeavours to represent the area in which it is located and the students it serves, as far as possible.

The School has an Accessibility Plan which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Key Principles

Our approach to equality is based on the following 7 key principles

- 1.1. All people are of equal value whether or not they are disabled, whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background, whatever their sexual orientation, their age, marital status and whether or not they are pregnant or on maternity.
- 1.2. We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength. We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face, in relation to disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, belief or faith and sexual orientation. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach, work and visit here.
- 1.3. We foster positive attitudes and relationships. We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.
- 1.4. We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of our school community to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community and to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully in school life.
- 1.5. We observe good equalities practice for our staff. We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development
- 1.6. We have the highest expectations of all our students. We expect that all students can make good progress and achieve to their highest potential
- 1.7. We work to raise standards for all students, but especially for the most vulnerable. We believe that improving the quality of education for the most vulnerable groups of students raises standards across the whole school.

Purpose of the policy

The Act was introduced to ensure protection from (direct and indirect) discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). This means that schools cannot discriminate against students or staff and treat them less favourably because of their sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy and maternity. Age and marriage and civil partnership are also “protected characteristics” applicable to staff but are not part of the school provisions related to students.

The Act requires all public organisations, including schools to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty(PSED) and two specific duties:

1. The PSED or “general duty”, which requires all public organisations, including schools to
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
 - Foster good relations between different groups

and

2. The duty to
 - Publish information to show compliance with the PSED
 - Publish Equality objectives which are specific and measurable

This policy describes how the school is meeting these statutory duties and is in line with national guidance. It includes information about how the school is complying with the PSED.

Development of the policy

When developing the policy we took account of the DfE advice on the Equality Act 2010 (“The Equality Act 2010 and schools Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities”), advice and guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and also the Ofsted Inspection Framework, which places a strong focus on improving the learning and progress of different groups and on closing gaps in standards. We note that OFSTED has a statutory duty to report on the outcomes and provision for students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.

Our Role

- We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions and exclusions; the way we provide education for our students and the way we provide access to facilities and services.
- We are aware of the Reasonable Adjustment duty for disabled students – designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled pupils and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers. (Please also refer to our Accessibility Plan which can be found in I:\All-Staff\Policies & Protocols\Policies\Accessibility Plan .pdf)
- We ensure that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities.
- We ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones.

- We take seriously the need to consider the equality implications when we develop, adapt and review any policy or procedure and whenever we make significant decisions about the day today life of the school.
- We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and by creating an environment which champions respect for all.
- Applications for admission from all potential pupils are considered in line with the admission arrangements and Special Educational Needs process. Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not discriminate against students by treating them less favourably on any grounds including but not limited to sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment
- We avoid language that runs the risk of placing a ceiling on any students' achievement or that seeks to define their potential as learners.
- We use a range of teaching strategies that ensures we meet the needs of all students.
- We provide support to students at risk of underachieving.
- We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality.
- We ensure equality of access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.
- We provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
- We oppose, avoid and eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

The School commits to:

- encourage equality and diversity in the community, create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the Equality Policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination

The principles of non-discrimination also apply to how we expect our employees to treat our employees, pupils, parents and carers, visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former

employees regardless of whether the legal protection of having a protected characteristic applies.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

- take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities

Such acts will be investigated and dealt with under the School's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence

- create opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- make decisions concerning staff based on merit
- review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law
- monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the Equality Policy (Appendix 1 refers)
- assess how the Equality Policy and any supporting action plan are working in practice
- under the PSED to publish equality information annually. Valence data and composition of workforce is attached under Appendix 2

Under the PSED the equality objectives is:

to increase the number of male employees working with students, to give the same choice that girls have for their care needs to be met by women so that boys can have their care needs met by men if they wish

The Equality Policy is fully supported by senior management and has been agreed with the Staff Council. Use of the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, if applicable, does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

Positive Action

- We prepare our students for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination through PSHE and citizenship and across the curriculum.
- We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability, avoiding stereotyping.
- We promote a whole school ethos and values that challenge prejudice based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour.

- We provide opportunities for students to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures.
- We include the contribution of different cultures to world history and that promote positive images of people
- We provide opportunities for students to listen to a range of opinions and empathise with different experiences
- We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, visitors, whole school events.

Expectations

We expect all members of the school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Act.

Principal and Senior Leadership Team

The Principal, with the support of the rest of the senior leadership team, will:

- promote the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- ensure that all staff are aware of their role and responsibilities regarding the promotion and delivery of equality in school
- report back to the governing body
- challenge inappropriate language and behaviour
- tackle bias and stereotyping
- take appropriate action where discrimination or victimisation occurs.

Staff

School staff will:

- ensure that they are up to date and aware of the school's policy towards all types of discrimination
- challenge inappropriate language and behaviour
- tackle bias and stereotyping
- work to promote anti-bullying strategies as outlined in the school's **behaviour and anti-bullying policy**
- show a commitment to undertake development and training within this area
- engage with the school in eliminating any discrimination and act as a good example to pupils
- promote a positive working environment
- report back to their managers immediately on any incidents relating to discrimination or victimisation, either by staff, pupils, or any other member of the school community, so that these incidents can be reviewed and action taken where necessary.

Pupils

Pupils at the school will:

- engage with the school in eliminating any discrimination
- promote a positive work environment and a positive attitude towards equality when both in school and off the school site
- report to school staff any incidents of inappropriate language or behaviour, discrimination or victimisation that they know to have occurred
- work to promote the anti-bullying strategies outlined in the school's **behaviour and anti-bullying policy**
- set a good example regarding behaviour and social awareness to younger pupils and their peers.

Parents, carers, and visitors

Parents, carers, and visitors to the school are expected to:]

- Comply with the School's Equal Opportunities Policy
- work with the school to resolve any incident relating to discrimination or victimisation that their child is involved in
- respect and follow our equality when visiting the school and comply with any duties as set out in this policy.

Governing body

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented.

Every governing body committee keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment.