



**MERCHANT
TAYLORS'
SCHOOLS**

For Boys and Girls
aged 4 to 18 years

Equal Opportunities Policy

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Equality and Diversity Policy

INTRODUCTION

The School is committed to work to eradicate discrimination and prejudice to create equality of opportunity not only fulfilling its legal position in relation to current and future equality legislation but goes beyond compliance in providing and promoting opportunity for all students to succeed, free from any aspect of discrimination.

This policy has been written in line with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Duties 2011. The Act covers the same groups, now called 'protected characteristics', that were protected by existing equality legislation – age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

All learners and staff have the opportunity to participate fully in achieving their full potential with support (where appropriate).

The school environment is welcoming and supportive and everyone accepts their responsibility to uphold equality and show respect for others. All complaints relating to equality are investigated and appropriate action is taken.

Our Responsibility

All aspects of our School life will be based on the foundation of inclusion, equality and diversity. The Equality Act came into force on 1st October 2010 and is in place to ensure fairness and that equality legislation is clearer and stronger. The Equality Act replaces nine pieces of complex discrimination law under one umbrella and emphasises under protected characteristics nine potential elements for discrimination as follows:

- Age
- Discrimination
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnerships
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion and Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

All of our School Policies should avoid negative or adverse impacts of services on the nine 'protected characteristics'. This policy should be read in conjunction with all other policies within School in order that equality is integral to each individual Policy's development and review.

Our School Ethos

Our School has developed a culture of social inclusion in which all students and staff are valued equally, irrespective of their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, beliefs or disability. We actively reduce barriers to learning and seek to promote participation for all, responding to and embracing the diversity of our students and our local community.

We believe that cultural and social differences are an important learning resource that supports learning and social development and helps all students to feel that they are valued and important members of our School. This prepares our students for a life in a diverse society. We believe that the curriculum within the School accurately reflects the cultural diversity of our society as a whole so that students progress with an appreciation of the contribution made by other cultures, even if they have not directly encountered them within School.

This Policy will apply to all areas of School activities whether curricular, assemblies, sporting, extra-curricular or work placements. Our School offers a wide range of enrichment activities which takes into account parental concerns relating to religion and culture. Our aim is for students and families to have opportunities to build successful relationships with others from all aspects of the local, wider and global community through a variety of visits and activities.

All documentation, communication and publicity will be designed to be non-discriminatory and will emphasise equality and the value of diversity. Our aim is that all groups will be equally represented.

Access to all areas and facilities will be provided for all staff and students in as far as this is possible within the resources available. Seating arrangements in classrooms will be such as to allow all students equal access to equipment, teachers, support and resources.

Discrimination in any form will not be tolerated by staff or students. All staff should ensure that unfair situations are recognised and dealt with including the following types of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination – where employees/applicants are treated less favourably because they are subject to the nine protected characteristics.
- Indirect discrimination – in which selection criteria, employment rules or the curriculum structure put individuals at a disadvantage of participating fully in our School life.
- Harassment – behaviour that is offensive, frightening or distressing in any way.
- Victimisation – when an individual is treated discriminately because s/he has made a complaint, intends to make a complaint about discrimination or harassment or has given evidence or intends to give evidence, relating to a complaint about discrimination or harassment.

School Practice

- All staff will abide by and play an active role in the development and implementation of our School Policies. Consultation will be sought in the development of policies from both staff and students.
- Staff will plan the curriculum to ensure that all students have equal access and that the needs of individual learners are considered and do not disadvantage any member of our School community. Methods of teaching and learning will discourage prejudice and enhance the value of diversity.
- Staff will present positive role models for all groups of students and will explore issues within the curriculum relating to discrimination and prejudice. Staff will at all times avoid language that is discriminatory or patronising.
- The School follows a curriculum which includes Citizenship which ensures the promotion of positive attitudes towards diversity.
- Our students will be given the opportunity to experience a variety of teaching and learning strategies which will allow them to explore concepts relating to cultural identity.
- We constantly monitor and evaluate the progress and achievement of all students and have high expectations to ensure that each individual achieves their full potential.
- We will ensure that all students, whatever their gender, ethnicity or special educational needs will receive an education that is appropriate to their needs.
- Staff will ensure that students are aware of their rights and responsibilities with respect to equality, both within School and in the wider community.
- Our School will seek to develop effective links with all communities and parents.
- We will deal effectively and proactively with regard to incidents of harassment or discrimination in the School and classroom. Staff will ensure that they are approachable to concerned students and give appropriate support to students who feel that they are affected by discrimination.
- We will ensure that students are aware of to whom to make a complaint and where they can get help.

Pastoral Care and Behaviour

We maintain a proactive and supportive pastoral system which supports each individual student and reflects individual needs and requirements. We ensure that students feel safe within School and if they have any concerns, that they know who to approach in order that their issues are addressed appropriately. We are completely opposed to all expressions or acts of a racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory nature. We will deal with all such incidents according to the agreed procedures for dealing with bullying or poor behaviour or within the Complaints Policy.

Our students have the right:

- Not to be discriminated against.
- To make a complaint if they feel that they are suffering discrimination.
- To have their complaint sympathetically listened to and dealt with.
- Not to be victimised if they do complain.

Our students have the responsibility:

- Not to discriminate against others, or to support the discrimination of others.
- To support other people who may be discriminated against and seek help.
- To report to a responsible person if they feel that discrimination is taking place.
- Not to victimise anyone who makes a complaint of discrimination.

This policy and statement will be regularly reviewed annually to ensure that it meets changes to legislation and the needs of the School, staff and students.

We believe that by the application of secure anti-discriminatory measures we can help to remove ignorance and misunderstanding via the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of our School activities value the diverse composition of both our school community and the wider society.

Policy Links

This Policy links directly to the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy, teaching and learning, assessment, citizenship, PSHE, work related learning, gifted and talented, looked after children and learning difficulties and disabilities.