

Equal Opportunities (Pupils) Policy

Aims and Principles

St Paul's Cathedral School is a Christian, co-educational community which holds to the values of love, justice, tolerance, respect, honesty, service and trust in its life and practice, to promote positive relationships throughout the school community and where the safety, welfare and emotional well-being of each child is of the utmost importance.

The school aims to instil a love of learning through a broad curriculum. It aims to give each pupil the opportunity to develop intellectually, socially, personally, physically, culturally and spiritually. All pupils are encouraged to work to the best of their ability and to achieve standards of excellence in all of their endeavours.

Through the corporate life of the school, and through good pastoral care, the school encourages the independence of the individual as well as mutual responsibility. It aims to make its pupils aware of the wider community, espouses the democratic process and encourages a close working relationship with parents and guardians.

Introduction

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of St Paul's Cathedral School. We are committed to:

- encouraging diversity,
- providing equal opportunities and
- eliminating discrimination amongst our pupils.

We recognise the benefits of having a diverse school community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Pupils will be taught to value and respect themselves and others.

Care is taken to ensure that our provision takes into account pupils' individual needs. All reasonable provision is made for pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs by the school.

The school values set out in the Aims and Principles in the preface to this policy align with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The school is committed to being an equal opportunities school and is committed to equal treatment for all pupils, regardless of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity (these are protected characteristics).

Aims

The aims of this policy and the school's ethos as a whole is to:

- communicate the school's commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities for its pupils
- eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics
- promote equal treatment for all members of the school community
- create and maintain an open and supportive environment, free from discrimination
- foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the school
- comply with the school's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010
- remove or help to overcome barriers for pupils where they already exist
- enforce that all discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic is unacceptable and will not be tolerated

All members of the school community are expected to comply with this policy and to treat others with dignity at all times.

All parents are expected to support the aims of this policy and the school's ethos of tolerance and respect.

Staff at the school, particularly those working at a management level, have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and principles of the school with regard to equal opportunities.

We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination on grounds of gender, disability, race, religion, cultural background, linguistic background, sexual orientation.

Regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared to meet the school's obligations under the:

- Equality Act 2010
- Statutory Framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage (November 2024)
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This policy has regard to the following statutory guidance and advice:

- Equality Act 2010 explanatory notes
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical Guidance for Schools in England (2023)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Admissions Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Good Behaviour Policy (includes information on exclusions)
- Accessibility Plan
- Anti-harassment Policy
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Staff Recruitment, Selection and Disclosure Policy

Admissions

SPCS treats every application for admission in a fair, open-minded and equal way in accordance with this policy and the school's Admissions Policy. Although an academically selective school, each application will be considered on its merits in accordance with the school's selection criteria based on an applicant's ability and aptitude. The school's aim is to encourage applications from prospective pupils with as diverse a range of background as possible. The school is committed to equal treatment for all and as such accepts applications from, and admits, all prospective pupils irrespective of their sex, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnicity, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief), social background or special educational needs ("SEN").

Please see the Equal Opportunities for Staff Policy / Recruitment Policy in relation to our approach to staff recruitment and selection.

The school does not unlawfully discriminate in any way regarding entry. The school welcomes pupils with disabilities and/or special education needs, provided we can offer them any support that they require, cater for any additional needs and that our site can accommodate them. Parents must inform the school when submitting the Registration Form of any disabilities and/or special education needs which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and/or ability to fully participate in the education provided by the school so that we can consider what reasonable adjustments may be necessary to ensure that the child is not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other children. The school will not offer a place to a child with disabilities if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the school feels that they cannot adequately cater or meet their needs, that the prospective pupil is not going to be able to meaningfully access the education offered, or that their health and safety, or those of other pupils or staff, may be put at risk.

Bursaries are means tested awards offered to those who meet the school's admission criteria but may otherwise be unable to attend the school due to financial hardship. Details of our provision for bursaries can be obtained from the Bursar.

Educational services

The school affords all pupils access to educational provision including all benefits, services, and facilities, irrespective of any protected characteristic (subject to our reasonable adjustments duty and considerations of safety and welfare). The school will not discriminate against a pupil on the grounds of any protected characteristic by excluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The school will:

- Treat all members of the school community with respect and dignity and seek to provide a positive working and learning environment free from discrimination
- Endeavour to meet the needs of all pupils and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics
- Ensure that pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with an Education Health Care Plan receive necessary educational and welfare support
- Monitor the admission and progress of pupils from different backgrounds
- Challenge inappropriate and unacceptable discriminatory behaviour by pupils and staff
- Encourage pupils to work and play freely and have respect for all other pupils irrespective of any protected characteristic
- Offer all pupils access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of extra-curricular activities
- Work with parents and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in school
- Ensure that it reviews, monitors, and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices
- Use the curriculum, assemblies, Cathedral services, form times and PSHE lessons to:

- Promote tolerance of and respect for each other, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
- Encourage pupils to question and challenge assumptions and stereotypes in order to better understand discriminatory behaviours and bias.

The school recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability whether or not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms (including cyberbullying) is unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Good Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies. The school's Good Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies make clear the seriousness of bullying, victimisation and harassment and that appropriate sanctions will be applied to any pupil who displays inappropriate behaviour.

Girls Voices Project

SPCS educates the Choristers of St Paul's Cathedral who are boarders at the school. Until the Chapter decision to open the chorister programme to girls (May 2022), only boys were admitted to the Choir and only boys boarded at the school. The inequality of this situation was highlighted by the Independent Schools Inspectorate inspection of SPCS (March 2022). A series of Action Plans setting out the school's timeline to address this have been accepted by the Department for Education and the current plan is being implemented.

The programme to introduce the Girls' Choir is known as the Girls' Voices Project. Girls were admitted as Probationers (training phase) on a day basis to the Choir in September 2023 and the first girl Choristers were admitted to the Choir during the Summer Term of 2024. An extensive fundraising programme is underway to fund the programme, including refurbishment of school accommodation to provide a second boarding house. Girl Choristers will attend as boarders from September 2025, on a fully equal basis to the boys.

Religious belief

Although the school's religious ethos is based on Christian values and tradition, SPCS is inclusive and welcomes and respects the rights and freedoms of individuals from other religions and faiths (or with no religion or faith) subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the rights and freedoms of other members of the school community.

Pupils learn about a variety of different faiths, but all acts of worship are consistent with the Christian tradition.

Regular assemblies take place in the Cathedral (led by members of the Cathedral clergy team on Tuesdays and by school staff on Fridays). Special events and services (Nativity for Reception pupils, Harvest Festival, St Paul's feast day) are closely linked to the calendar of the Church of England. SPCS pupils at appropriate stages in their school career are invited to participate in public services including an annual Advent Carol Service and Palm Sunday. School services are also held in the Cathedral, including a Carol Service and Ash Wednesday communion service.

The Governing Body, through the Senior Leadership Team, actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Requests for variation in the school uniform

All pupils are required to wear a uniform. The Head will consider requests from parents and pupils for variations to the uniform for reasons related to disability, gender reassignment and/or on religious grounds provided they are consistent with the school's policy on health and safety and that such request/s are reasonable in all the circumstances including in light of the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn to school, parents are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Head, in advance.

Reasonable adjustments for pupils with disability

The school is committed to treating all pupils fairly and in light of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the school will seek to ensure that pupils are not put at a substantial disadvantage, by comparison with pupils who are not disabled. As such, the school has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability which includes:

1. making reasonable adjustments to our policies, criteria and practices (i.e. the way the school does things); and
2. providing auxiliary aids and services (i.e. provision of additional support or assistance).

Where the school is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, it will consult with parents and, where appropriate, the pupil, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and (with the parents' consent) any appropriate third party, which may include for example, a medical practitioner or educational psychologist. The school will discuss what reasonable adjustments, if any, the school is able to make to avoid their child being put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other pupils. The school will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a pupil's disability and the resources available to the school. Further information on the school's reasonable adjustments duty can be found in the school's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Policy.

The school is not required to remove or alter physical features to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils or prospective pupils. Similarly, the school is not required to provide auxiliary aids for personal purposes unconnected with its provision of education and services.

The school has an Accessibility Plan in place, a hard copy of which is available upon request from the school office. This sets out the school's plan to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school;

and improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Monitoring and review

The Head regularly monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy and reports to the governors annually on the policy's effectiveness in practice.

The Head oversees the implementation of the Action Plan approved by the Department for Education with relation to the Girls' Voices Project, sits on the Girls' Voices Project Board and reports termly to the Governing Body on progress.

Breaches of this policy

Pupils who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the school's Good Behaviour Policy.

SPCS is committed to ensuring that all in the community are equally respected and treated equally. If you believe that a pupil has received less favourable treatment as a result of a protected characteristic, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to a pupil's detriment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the school's complaints procedure available on the website.

Version Control

Date of adoption of this policy	22.04.24
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Policy Owner (SLT)	Head
Policy Owner (Governing Body)	Andrew De Silva