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Equal Opportunities Policy

2023-2024

This policy is applicable to all pupils, including those in the EYFS.

Sherborne Preparatory School is committed to promoting the concept of equal opportunities for employment, training and advancement and for access to its services. Sherborne Preparatory School is non-selective and operates a clear Equality & Diversity Policy. This means that our pupils and staff do not experience inappropriate discrimination because of differences arising out of gender, pregnancy or maternity, disability, race, religion or belief, cultural background, linguistic background, special educational need, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, non-binary or academic or sporting ability. These factors are taken into account in the care of all our pupils, so that care is sensitive to different needs.

It is a condition of service that all staff adhere to the Equal Opportunities policy not only in their dealings with one another, but also in their approach to and dealings with present and prospective pupils, their parents and guardians and with the suppliers of goods and services to the School.

Sherborne Preparatory School recognizes its moral and legal responsibilities for ensuring that prospective and present pupils, applicants for employment and staff are not subjected to unfair or to unlawful discrimination when seeking to join the school (whether as pupil or staff), while at the School and in the terms and conditions of employment on which staff are engaged. It also recognises the need to create an atmosphere in which staff are able and willing to give of their best. This can only be achieved if all those who apply for and secure a place at the School are treated fairly and are seen to be so treated.

AIMS

The purpose of this statement is to make clear that Sherborne Preparatory School is committed to promoting and maintaining equal opportunities, to preventing unlawful and unfair discrimination for those attending the School and to ensuring that staff are aware of the part they must play in maintaining a fair working environment. It is appreciated that the successful implementation of this policy depends on the willingness and co-operation of the staff, to which end this document aims:

- *to provide a brief summary of the obligations imposed by law on employers and their staff to avoid discrimination;*
- *to draw attention to the potential legal and disciplinary consequences of unlawful discrimination; and*
- *to explain the discrimination complaints procedure.*

Unlawful Discrimination

This section is intended to give only general guidance on the law relating to discrimination. It does not attempt to offer a definitive statement of this complicated area of the law. Any member of staff requiring further information must feel free to take legal advice.

The following forms of discrimination are all unlawful and their commission could result in legal proceedings being brought against the party responsible and/or Sherborne Preparatory School. Staff should be aware that discrimination can still give rise to legal proceedings and liability for employment tribunal awards even if committed outside working hours and away from the workplace, for example at staff social events.

(a) Direct sex or race discrimination

This involves treating a person less favourably than another in relation to any aspect of employment because of his or her sex, race, ethnic or national origins or for reasons connected with sexual, racial, ethnic or national grouping.

(b) Indirect sex or race discrimination

This occurs when an unjustifiable requirement or qualification for employment is imposed which, on the face of it, applies to everyone but which, in practice, disadvantages one sex or one racial, national or ethnic grouping more than another.

(c) Disability discrimination

This occurs:-

(i) Where for reasons which relate to his or her physical or mental disability, an employer or provider of goods and services treats a disabled person less favourably than others who do not have a disability and this treatment cannot be justified.

(ii) Where an employer or provider of goods or services fails without justification to take reasonable steps to prevent any of its arrangements or any physical feature of its premises from placing a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage by comparison with persons who are not disabled.

(d) Sexual & racial harassment

These are just two but, unhappily, all too common forms of discrimination that are both unlawful and which, like other forms of unfair discrimination, can cause great offence and have a very serious effect on the lives of those who find themselves at the receiving end.

Victims of harassment can become less motivated and less productive and are likely to find the experience highly distressing and prolonged harassment can impair a person's health. Sherborne Preparatory School is committed to preventing sexual and racial harassment in the working environment.

It may not be possible to offer an exhaustive definition of harassment but, generally, this involves unwelcome, uninvited and unacceptable behaviour that is either sexually or racially motivated.

Examples of such conduct include:

- i. Physical abuse and intimidation
- ii. Unwarranted touching, pinching and brushing against a person
- iii. Upskirting
- iv. Making lewd or embarrassing personal remarks
- v. Ridiculing a person's sex, sexual orientation, colour or origins
- vi. Using inappropriate terms of endearment
- vii. Linking sexual favours with career opportunities

Any display or promotion of pornographic, sexually explicit, lewd or racially divisive posters and literature.

Harassment is equally unacceptable and unlawful when it occurs outside as well as within normal working hours, for example at training sessions or a staff social event.

(e) Direct discrimination on grounds of religion and sexual orientation

This occurs when someone is treated less favourably than others because of his or her religion, religious or similar philosophical belief or because of his or her sexual orientation towards persons of the same and/or the opposite sex.

(f) Indirect discrimination on grounds of religion and sexual orientation

This arises when some requirement or practice, that is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, applies equally to everyone regardless of religion, religious or similar philosophical belief or sexual orientation but puts or would put someone and others of the same religion, belief or orientation at a particular disadvantage.

(g) Victimization

This involves treating a person less favourably because, in good faith, that person has either complained of discrimination or has brought or otherwise taken part in proceedings connected with a complaint of discrimination.

Consequences of Unlawful Discrimination

Any act of unlawful discrimination, including discrimination against a fellow or a prospective member of staff and against any client, supplier or agent, could give rise to costly and time-consuming legal proceedings and might expose Sherborne Preparatory School and staff directly responsible to the risk of orders for compensation and declaratory relief.

Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against staff who commit any act of unlawful discrimination or who otherwise infringe the Equal Opportunities Policy; such action may include summary dismissal. Not every failure to maintain equal opportunities will necessarily amount to unlawful discrimination but Sherborne Preparatory School nevertheless views any act or omission that is likely to undermine or infringe its policy as having disciplinary implications.

Monitoring and Review

Sherborne Preparatory School realises that regular monitoring of working practices, of the terms and conditions upon which staff are employed and of the treatment of pupils, prospective pupils and their parents and guardians is essential to the effectiveness of its Equal Opportunities Policy and to this end such practices, terms, conditions and procedures will be kept under review and such adjustments made, as from time to time may be necessary, to ensure that staff and job applicants, pupils, prospective pupils, their parents and guardians and suppliers of goods and services to the School do not fall victim to unfair or unlawful discrimination, whether deliberate or inadvertent.

Sherborne Preparatory School will monitor compliance with and the development of its policy with a view to ensuring its effectiveness. Any queries or suggestions relating to the policy and its implementation should be referred to the Head.

Equal Opportunities Grievance Procedure

Without prejudice to the right to invoke normal grievance procedures, a member of staff who becomes aware of any contravention of the Equal Opportunities Policy or who feels that he or she has been treated unfairly for reasons that involve an element of discrimination should raise the matter directly with the Head. In cases where this is not appropriate (e.g. where the Head is the person against whom the complaint is made), then the matter should be reported to the Chairman of the Governors.

A timely investigation will be conducted into any alleged breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy and into any complaint that is reported. This investigation will be carried out with sensitivity and in a confidential manner. Where a complaint is raised, all parties will receive a fair and impartial hearing. If an investigation reveals that a complaint is valid, it will be given prompt attention and action will be taken wherever practicable to remedy and to prevent further unfair treatment.

Steps will be taken to prevent victimisation of employees filing any complaint and/ assisting with the investigation of a complaint. Retaliation against an employee complaining about discrimination or harassment will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

Vulnerable Persons

Sherborne Preparatory School endeavours to identify, protect and properly cater for those persons in its care and employment who are seen as vulnerable. These may include:

- Pupils who are homesick, unwell, depressed or suffering ill-health. This responsibility lies with all members of staff at the school and is overseen by the Deputy Head Pastoral. See Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy for further clarification.
- Pupils who are vulnerable by nature or personality. The School seeks to encourage the individual and celebrate difference in belief, in attitude, and ability and in interest. The responsibility for nurturing and protecting those pupils who have difficulty being assimilated into the mainstream resides with the Form Teachers, Tutors and Pastoral Care Staff.
- Pupils who have some physical disability (see Disability Policy)
- Pupils who have learning difficulties (see Learning Support Policy)
- Pupils of different religious persuasion (see Admissions Policy)
- Staff may be vulnerable by temperament, nature of employment, family circumstances, personal interests or beliefs. The School seeks to encourage and celebrate individual differences concerning belief, attitude, ability and individual interest amongst staff and pupils. The responsibility for nurturing and protecting those staff who have difficulty in the workplace resides with the Senior Management Team.
- Staff, parents and visitors who have some physical disability (see Disability Policy)

Disability

Admission to Sherborne Prep is by interview. There is no specific entry requirement, however the School must feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of their potential and every opportunity is made to ensure that the pupil will have a complete, happy and successful school career and emerge confident and well-rounded.

The School's policy is to apply these criteria to all pupils and potential pupils regardless of any disability, physical or health issues, mental health or learning disability of which it is aware, subject to its obligation to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage, compared to any pupil who is not disadvantaged because of his or her disability.

Entry to the school will also be influenced by previous school records. Parents must also provide details of any assessments and/or medical needs that should be taken into account. The school may need to take advice and request assessments as appropriate. Subject to this, the school will be sensitive to confidentiality. As a result of information available, the school would need to carefully consider entry of a child with severe learning needs and its suitability as a nurturing environment for them.

The School is eager that disabled people should have easy, dignified access to the school building and facilities whenever this can be reasonably done and proposes to adopt accessibility plans which are consistent with the special architectural and historic character of the buildings.

This Disability Policy will be reviewed regularly by the School and it may take advice from experts in any relevant field. The terms of reference are:

- to review the School's policies, procedures and facilities as they are likely to affect parents, visitors, pupils and prospective pupils who are disabled.
- to make recommendations with a view to improving the accessibility of education to pupils or prospective pupils with disabilities by means of reasonable adjustments and by planning for the future.

- to prepare an Accessibility Plan
- to review such plans and policies as necessary and at least every two years.

Equality and Diversity

Challenging stereotypes, promoting respect and encouraging tolerance

'We are all citizens of one world; we are all of one blood.'

Jan Amos Comenius, 1592-1670

Sherborne Preparatory School is a welcoming school where everyone is highly valued and where the values of tolerance, honesty, co-operation and mutual respect for others are fostered. We are committed to the development of the whole person within a supportive, secure and creative environment. A broad, balanced, and appropriate curriculum provides equal opportunity for all pupils to maximise their potential regardless of age, sex, race, colour, religion or disability. At Sherborne Prep our six Core Values are kindness, perseverance, awareness, generosity, honesty and independence.

At Sherborne Preparatory School we aim to promote equality and tackle any form of discrimination and to actively promote harmonious relations in all areas of school life. We seek to remove any barriers to access, participation, progression, attainment and achievement. We endeavour to promote positive relationships with parents, governors and members of the community in order to find cohesion with our neighbours.

Specific departmental references to equality and diversity can be found in our Pre-Prep policy, Code of Behaviour, our Equal Opportunities policy, our Code of Conduct, SMSC, our Accessibility Plan, our Admissions Policy, our Able, Gifted and Talented policy and other relevant departmental documentation, and these refer to aspects such as the resourcing and delivery of lessons in each subject with respect to the promotion of equality and diversity. However, in the school environment there is an inextricable link between the taught academic curriculum and the 'moral curriculum,' so the contents of this policy can be seen as providing the backbone for an 'umbrella' policy on equality and diversity at Sherborne Preparatory School.¹

Sherborne Preparatory School's boarding environment makes the upholding of the values of equality and diversity even more important. The majority of our EAL speakers are full time boarders who will call the Prep their home for much of the academic year, and we understand that these children in particular require a cultural welcome and celebration of the diversity which they bring to our school community. This understanding underlines much of our policy and provides the foundations for the following aims:

- To provide a secure environment in which all our children can flourish and achieve all five outcomes of 'Every Child Matters' 2003 i.e., to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, and achieve, make a positive contribution and enjoy economic well-being.
- To provide a learning environment where all individuals see themselves reflected and feel a sense of belonging.
- To prepare children for life in a diverse society in which children are able to see their place in the local, regional, national and international community.

¹ It is, however, recognised that there will be elements of our curriculum which seem to be at odds with some of the aims set down in this policy, PE and Games, for example, in which the division of the sexes for a match situation is a legal requirement.

- To include and value the contribution of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity.
- To provide positive non-stereotyping information about different groups of people regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age.
- To plan systematically to improve our understanding and promotion of diversity.
- To actively challenge discrimination and disadvantage.
- To make inclusion a thread which runs through all our activities.

In order to achieve these aims in general we will:

- Share our policy with the parent body and the local community by publishing it on the school website.
- Set suitable learning challenges for all, respond to pupils' diverse needs and overcome any potential barriers to learning.
- Ensure that the wider school curriculum makes explicit and implicit provision to promote and celebrate diversity.
- Promote the diversity of our school community within the school itself through displays, talks etc.
- Have high expectations of behaviour which demonstrates respect to others regardless of race, gender, age, colour, religion or disability.

More specifically, all staff will:

- Be vigilant in all areas of the school for any type of harassment and bullying.
- Deal effectively with all incidents from overt name-calling to the more subtle forms of victimisation caused by perceived differences.
- Identify and challenge bias and stereotyping within the curriculum and in the school's culture.
- Promote equality and good relations and not discriminate on grounds of race, gender, religion, age and sexual orientation.
- Promote an inclusive curriculum and whole school ethos which reflects the diversity of our society.

There are a number of specific events and activities that take place around the school, which contribute to the broad realisation of the aims of this policy. These can be categorised as contributing to our success in achieving one or more of the five outcomes under 'Every Child Matters.' These activities and events are designed to broaden the life experience of our pupils in order that they are exposed to as wide a variety of cultures, religions, ages, social backgrounds and viewpoints as possible, which challenges any pre-conceptions regarding certain groups of people and encourages a broad world view in preparation for life in a culturally, racially and socially rich world.

These are documented below:

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Being Healthy
<p>The playing of a diverse range of games in PE and Sport</p> <p>Meals celebrating food and culture from a foreign country represented amongst our pupils' nationalities</p> <p>PD education for maintaining a healthy lifestyle</p> <p>FMS: Functional Movement Screening</p> <p>Cookery sessions and engagement sessions with Chartwells</p>
Stay Safe
<p>Personal Development sessions on 'staying safe' are based around understanding the different threats to personal safety encountered by boys and girls.</p> <p>E-Safety education through ICT and PD lessons</p> <p>E-Safety information and lectures for children and parents</p>
Enjoy and Achieve
<p>Seasonal, cultural and traditional outings for EAL students introducing them to local traditions</p> <p>Various language and cultural shaping events</p> <p>The celebration of different religions and cultures through literature in the form of book displays in the library, including reference books concerning a range of religions and cultures as well as fiction set in foreign countries.</p> <p>Attending local events</p> <p>PD curriculum</p>
Make a Positive Contribution
<p>Community Action events that link to local charities</p> <p>EAL students invited to speak to younger children on their country of origin/culture.</p> <p>Links with the local retirement home are encouraged and the local special Educational Needs school are invited to visit.</p> <p>EAL students make presentations about their home countries in assemblies.</p> <p>Personal Development sessions are working towards greater community-based work.</p> <p>Activities which allow children to 'give back'</p>
Enjoy Economic Well Being
<p>Where appropriate, activities in the maths department will include exchange rates between world currencies with a brief description of each country and economic situation.</p> <p>Money and materials are raised for various schools abroad, through charity assemblies.</p> <p>Personal Development sessions focus on budgeting and managing finances in the senior part of the School.</p> <p>External speakers for children</p>