

# The Highfield School

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## EQUALITY SCHEME

### Resources and Strategy Advisory Group RSAG 11 (incorporating The Highfield School Accessibility Plan)

#### Vision and Values

The Highfield School values and celebrates diversity and welcomes the contributions which different groups and individuals make to our community. This policy reflects our commitment to encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination. It is in keeping with our vision of a diverse and tolerant school, where everyone has a stake in the community. It furthers our aim to ensure everyone feels valued and has equality of opportunity, and to ensure our wider community benefits from the work of the school, building on the values of community cohesion.

To that end, our policy is that equality and fairness will be provided for all. Discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender identity and reassignment, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity and race, religion or belief, sex (gender), or sexual orientation will not be tolerated.

This policy is the school's response to the specific and general duties of the Equality Act 2010. It provides information on the arrangements that we have in place to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. It sets out the steps the school will take in order to achieve improved outcomes for all students, parents/carers and staff in all aspects of school life.

#### Principles

In fulfilling our legal obligations we are guided by the following principles:

##### Principle 1: All learners are of equal value

We see all learners and potential learners, and their parents and carers, as 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.

##### Principle 2: We recognise and respect difference

Treating people equally (Principle 1 above) does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences of life-experience, outlook, background and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

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- disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made;
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised;
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of girls and boys, and women and men are recognised;
- gender identity
- religion, belief or faith background;
- sexual orientation.

## Principle 3: We foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging

We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non-disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people;
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents;
- mutual respect and good relations between boys and girls, and women and men, and an absence of sexual and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic harassment.

## Principle 4: We observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development

We ensure that policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whether or not they are disabled;
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status;
- whatever their gender identify and sexual orientation, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity.

## Principle 5: We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between:

- disabled and non-disabled people;
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds;
- girls and boys, women and men.

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## Principle 6: We consult and involve widely

We engage with a range of groups and individuals to 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 consult and involve:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled;
- people from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds;
- both women and men, and girls and boys;
- people regardless of their sexual orientations.

## Principle 7: Society as a whole should benefit

We intend that our policies and activities should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in public life of:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled;
- people of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds;
- both women and men, girls and boys;
- people regardless of their sexual orientations

## Principle 8: We base our practices on sound evidence

We maintain and publish quantitative and qualitative information showing our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) set out in clause 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

## Principle 9: Objectives

We formulate and publish specific and measurable objectives, based on the evidence we have collected and published (principle 8) and the engagement in which we have been involved (principle 7). The objectives which we identify take into account national and local priorities and issues, as appropriate. We keep our equality objectives under review and report annually on progress towards achieving them.

## Measurable Objectives:

- To use performance data to monitor student achievement and respond to variations between groups of learners, subjects, courses and key stages, trends over time and comparisons with other schools. In particular, we will seek to further improve the progress made by boys at Key Stage 4 whilst ensuring that the progress of girls continues to be promoted.

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- To engage with our school values of Equality and Equity to ensure that our school continues our commitment to equality.
- To foster good relations between different groups through the use of assemblies, trips and the Religious and Personal Studies curriculum, which includes external visitors and sessions.
- To challenge stereotypes that can deny opportunities to students through option and careers guidance.
- To maintain accessibility across the school for students, staff and visitors with disabilities, including access to specialist teaching areas.
- To continue to place staff and student wellbeing as a school priority

Specific tasks relating to these objectives can be found within the School Development Plan.

## **Progress made 2016-19**

- We moved into our new school building in 2016, with facilities and parking to ensure adequate accessibility for all
- We reviewed the RPS curriculum and assembly schedule in 2018 to ensure appropriate coverage of equality related content
- We achieved the Wellbeing Award in 2019 for our strategic work on supporting student and staff wellbeing, which was an outcome of the appointment of a Wellbeing Coordinator in 2017
- We achieved the Stonewall Bronze award in 2018 for our LGBT+ work
- We continued to move towards meeting the Gatsby benchmarks for Careers guidance, including planning for the reintroduction of work experience in Year 10 in 2020.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare was judged to be good by Ofsted in June 2017
- Our data tracking systems continue to enable school staff to focus on identifying and addressing gaps in progress between boys and girls and we continue to closely track the progress and attainment of students with SEN
- Our uniform policy was adjusted in 2018 and now does not specify uniform by gender
- Greater use of the student leadership group and student council on particular equality related issues in school, including setting up an anti-bullying ambassador scheme in 2019
- Introducing a trans-gender protocol in 2018 and ensuring that all school policies, protocols and communications with home are LGBT+ compliant
- Changes to the behaviour for learning policy and behaviour ladder in 2018, to ensure that sanctions for prejudice based language and behaviour is clear, transparent and imposed where necessary

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## School Context

### **The characteristics of our school – further data available on request.**

The Highfield School is an average sized fully comprehensive school with over 1,000 students from a broad variety of academic, social and economic backgrounds.

## Legal Background

Our school is committed to meeting its Public Sector Statutory Equality Duties (PSED) as detailed below. We understand that the duties apply to service delivery and employment and staff management as well as policy development and implementation.

General Duty under the Equality Act 2010:

The purpose of this policy is to set out how our practice and policies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The specific duties of the act enable The Highfield School to meet the obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). As part of our specific duty we will monitor and publish annually relevant information to demonstrate our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) set out in clause 149 of the Equality Act 2010, and to aid identification of priority equality issues. We will also set every four years one or more specific measurable equality objectives that further the aims of the equality duty. All school policies should adhere to the nine principles.

## Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 protects pupils from discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics. The protected characteristics for school provisions are:

- age (for staff only)
- disability
- ethnicity and race
- gender (sex)
- gender identity and reassignment
- pregnancy, maternity and breast feeding
- religion and belief
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

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## Disability

At The Highfield School we implement accessibility plans which are aimed at:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of the school to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided;
- improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

## Community Cohesion

By community cohesion, we mean working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society of similar life chances for all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and the wider community.

Community Cohesion supports good practice in educating students about equality and diversity. It contributes to the school's efforts to provide a broad, balanced curriculum.

For The Highfield School the term 'Community' has a number of dimensions including:

- The school community – the children and young people it serves, their parents, carers and families, the school's staff and governing body, and community users of the school's facilities and services;
- The Letchworth Garden City Education Partnership;
- The community within which the school is located – the school in its geographical community and the people who live or work in the area. This applies not just to the immediate neighbourhood but also to the city or local authority area within which a school is located;
- The UK community – all schools are by definition part of this community; and
- The global community – formed by EU and international links.

## Roles and Responsibilities

At The Highfield School we will publish relevant equality information annually which will be made available via our newsletters and website. We will publish:

- attainment and achievement data;
- the Behaviour For Learning Policy;
- aspects of the curriculum which explore different cultures and promotes understanding of different religions;
- information about any involvement with local or global communities
- information about links with other schools.

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## The Headteacher and senior staff will:

- initiate and oversee the development and regular review of equality policies and procedures including any associated plan(s) in the School Development Plan;
- consult pupils, staff and stakeholders in the development and review of the policies;
- ensure the effective communication of the policies to all pupils, staff and stakeholders;
- ensure that managers and staff are trained as necessary to carry out the policies;
- oversee the effective implementation of the policies;
- hold line managers accountable for effective policy implementation;
- provide appropriate role models for all managers, staff and pupils;
- highlight good practice from departments, individual managers, staff and pupils;
- provide mechanisms for the sharing of good practice;
- ensure that the school carries out its statutory duties effectively;
- ensure staff recruitment, training opportunities and conditions promote equality;
- ensure the curriculum promotes positive attitudes to equality, challenging stereotyping;
- ensure curriculum choices are offered in such a way as to avoid any discrimination or stereotypes;
- ensure a consistent response to incidents, e.g. bullying cases and racist incidents;
- ensure relevant information and data is collected, analysed and reviewed so as to identify equality issues.

## Middle Leaders will:

- respond to consultation requests by creating opportunities for students and staff to share their comments, suggestions and feedback, ensuring that all voices are heard;
- implement the school's equality scheme, holding staff accountable for their behaviour and providing support and guidance as necessary;
- be accountable for the behaviour of the staff team, individual members of staff and pupils;
- use informal and formal procedures as necessary to deal with 'difficult' situations;
- behave in accordance with the school's policies, leading by example
- respond appropriately to the behaviour of students and staff, as a whole, and individuals (praising/challenging as necessary);
- contribute to managing the implementation of the school's equality scheme.

## All staff: teaching and support will:

- contribute to consultations and reviews;
- raise issues with line managers which could contribute to policy review and development;

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- maintain awareness of the school's current equality policy and procedures which will include reading the policy and ensuring they understand their responsibilities;
- implement the policy as it applies to staff and students;
- behave with respect and fairness to all colleagues and students;
- carrying out the letter and spirit of the school's equality scheme;
- provide a consistent response to incidents, e.g. bullying cases and racist incidents;
- contribute to the implementation of the school's equality scheme.

## Governors will:

- provide leadership and drive for the development and regular review of the school's Equality and other policies;
- provide leadership and ensure the accountability of the Headteacher and senior staff for the communication and implementation of school policies;
- highlight good practice and promote it throughout the school and wider community;
- provide appropriate role models for all managers, staff and pupils;
- congratulate examples of good practice from the school and among individual managers, staff and students;
- ensure a consistent response to incidents, e.g. bullying cases and racist incidents;
- ensure that the school carries out the letter and the spirit of the statutory duties (and ensuring the provision of 'returns' to the local authority);
- designate a lead governor for equality issues;
- actively and positively promote equality and avoid any form of discrimination when recruiting to the governing body;
- apply the principles of best value without discrimination when purchasing goods and services;
- ensure as far as practicable the accessibility of the school's premises and associated educational services.

## Engagement

The development of this policy will be inclusive of the whole school community, taking into account the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010. We welcome the participation and involvement of people from broad and diverse backgrounds and of different abilities.

When deciding what to do to tackle equality issues, we will consult and engage both with people affected by our decisions - parents, students, staff, members of the local community – and with people who have special knowledge which can inform the school's approach, such as disability equality groups and other relevant special interest organisations.

Evidence of this engagement will be included in the published material showing how the duty has been addressed.

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The following mechanisms will ensure the views of staff, students and parents will inform the policy:

- the school council;
- interviews with students;
- individual interviews with students involved in incidents of a discriminatory nature;
- individual interviews with students experiencing reasonable adjustments;
- regular whole staff meetings with specific related agenda items;
- individual discussions as part of the appraisal process;
- parent and carer consultation groups;
- parent and carer consultation evenings;
- governing body meetings;
- feedback from groups using the school beyond the school day.

As the scheme progresses we will consider the exact nature of the most efficient methods of ensuring engagement of all of these groups. In this way the school will be able to engage parents and carers, students and staff and ensure all views are represented.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The governing body will monitor the pattern and frequency of incidents of inequality. It will receive reports and data from the Headteacher and staff which enable it to evaluate the relevance of provision for:

- dealing with incidents of inequality;
- recruitment promotion and professional development of staff;
- disciplinary and grievance procedures relating to staff;
- use of school premises.

The governing body will also receive reports on the progress of students in protected groups.

Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) helps us to analyse whether what we are planning potentially has a differential impact on one or more particular group (either positively or negatively). EQIAs help us to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against certain individuals or groups and that the positive duties are promoted. Data which we consider in analysing the effects of our policies and practices on protected groups includes the following examples:

- we collect a range of information relating to incidents of harassment and bullying including those relating to racism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, disability and gender;
- we analyse attainment and achievement data including ASP online data and our own internal data;

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- we value qualitative information which may be given to us through a variety of mechanisms;
- we conduct student voice activities such as anti-bullying questionnaires;
- the Local Authority provides us with a range of services which support the equality agenda and helps us to identify our strengths and those areas requiring action.

When procuring goods and services from external suppliers, we ask the following questions to help ensure that equality issues and duties are taken into account:

- could the proposed procurement affect the duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity amongst the school community? If so, is there a need to include some equality requirement within the contract and what would this be?
- We ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our equality policy and we require similar compliance by any sub-contractors.

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## Section 1 – How does your school deliver the curriculum?

| Question |   | RAG | Action  | Staff/Gov Responsible |
|----------|---|-----|---|-----------------------|
| 1.1      | Do you ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have the necessary training to teach and support disabled pupils?     |     | Learning Disabled   | SENCo                 |
|          |   |     | Physical Disabled   |                       |
|          |   |     | Visually/Hearing Impaired                                       |                       |
| 1.2      | Are your classrooms optimally organised for disabled pupils?  |     | New build DDA compliant.  | HT                    |
| 1.3      | Do lessons provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve?   |     | Lessons are differentiated<br>SEN Student Profiles<br>SDP       | SENCo<br>SLT          |
| 1.4      | Do lessons involve work to be done by individuals, pairs, groups and the whole class?                                     |     |   | AHT T&L               |
| 1.5      | Are all pupils encouraged to take part in music, drama and physical activities?   |     | Broad & balanced curriculum                                     | DT                    |
| 1.6      | Do staff recognise and allow for the additional time required by some disabled pupils to use equipment in practical work? |     | Reasonable adjustments handout issued Sept 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019 | SENCo                 |

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|      |   |  |   |       |
|------|---|--|---|-------|
| 1.7  | Do staff provide alternative ways of giving access to experience or understanding for disabled pupils who cannot engage in particular activities, for example some forms of exercise in physical education? |  | PE/Drama/Technology are examples of good practice.  | HoD   |
| 1.8  | Do you provide access to computer technology appropriate for students with disabilities?  |  | PNI have equipment provided by outside agencies.<br>Read/write software has increasing use. | SENCo |
| 1.9  | Are school visits, including overseas visits, made accessible to all pupils irrespective of attainment or impairment?   |  |   | HT    |
| 1.10 | Do staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation?   |  |   | SENCo |

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## Section 2 – Is your school designed to meet the needs of all pupils?

| Question  | RAG | Action  | Staff/Gov Responsible |
|---|-----|---|-----------------------|
| 2.1 Does the size and layout of areas – including all academic, sporting, play, social facilities, classrooms, the assembly hall, canteen, library, gymnasium and outdoor sporting facilities, playgrounds and common rooms – allow access to all pupils? |     |   |                       |
| 2.2 Can pupils who use wheelchairs move around the school without experiencing barriers to access such as those caused by doorways, steps and stairs, toilet facilities and showers?  |     |   |                       |
| 2.3 Are pathways of travel around the school site and parking arrangements safe, route logical and well signed?   |     |   |                       |
| 2.4 Are emergency and evacuation systems set up to inform ALL pupils, including pupils with SEN and disability; including alarms with both visual and auditory components?  |     | Evac plans exist for wheelchair users.<br>There is no visual component to our alarm system. |                       |
| 2.5 Are non-visual guides used to assist people to use buildings including lifts with tactile buttons?  |     | Lifts in the new build have braille buttons   |                       |
| 2.7 Are areas to which pupils should have access well lit?  |     |   |                       |
| 2.7 Are steps made to reduce background noise for hearing   |     | We have told certain groups of students that  |                       |

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| Question | RAG | Action                          | Staff/Gov Responsible |
|----------|-----|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
|          |     | they can use our ear defenders. |                       |
| 2.8      |     |                                 |                       |

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## Section 3 – How does your school deliver materials in other formats?

| Question  | RAG | Action   | Staff/Gov Responsible |
|---|-----|--|-----------------------|
| 3.1 Do you provide information in simple language, symbols, large print, on audiotape or in Braille for pupils and prospective pupils who may have difficulty with standard forms of printed information? |     | We have one visually impaired students whose needs are catered for within LD.                |                       |
| 3.2 Do you ensure that information is presented to groups in a way which is user friendly for people with disabilities e.g. by reading aloud overhead projections and describing diagrams?                |     | This is an expectation of Quality First Teaching. Information of need is available to staff. |                       |
| 3.3 Do you have the facilities such as ICT to produce written information in different formats?   |     | Yes – but no current need (willingness to do this advertised in Newsletter)                  |                       |
| 3.4 Do you ensure that staff are familiar with technology and practices developed to assist people with disabilities?   |     | Not required at this time.   |                       |