



Gosfield School

Equal Opportunities Policy

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 is a law which bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. The act covers nine protected characteristics, which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Every person has one or more of the protected characteristics, so the act protects everyone against unfair treatment. The Equality Act sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person.

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Gosfield School. We welcome applications from pupils with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our pupils for today's world. We concentrate on educating the individual, to provide a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish.

Gosfield School is committed to equal treatment for all, regardless of an individual's race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, learning difficulty, body image or social background. We are an academically non-selective school, although we do assess pupils on application to the school to ensure we can provide the best education possible for each pupil and to enable us to plan accordingly, and we believe that the educational experience can only be enriched if children are exposed to as wide a range of cultural experiences as possible whilst they are developing. The School provides equal opportunities for all pupils regardless of sex; both male and female pupils have equal opportunities to participate in all activities such as sports. Equal opportunities also exist regardless of gender reassignment or in matters of pregnancy or maternity.

We welcome applications from pupils with special needs and disabilities. Bursaries are offered and application is open to all prospective pupils in order to make it available for as many as possible who meet the School's admission criteria to attend the School. Details of our provision for bursaries can be found on our School website.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Principal, the Senior Leadership Team, and all staff play an active role in monitoring the implementation of the School's policy on equal opportunities. Use is made of assemblies, PSHE, RE and other lessons to:

- Promote tolerance of each other and respect for each other's position within the school community.
- Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
- Foster an open-minded approach and encourage pupils to recognise the contributions made by different cultures.
- Understand why and how we will deal with offensive language and behaviour.
- Understand why we will deal with any incidents promptly and in a sensitive manner.

Harassment in all its forms is unlawful and unacceptable. Our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies contain clear procedures for dealing with unlawful discrimination.

A successful equal opportunities policy requires strong and positive support from parents and guardians, and full acceptance of the School's ethos of tolerance and respect.

MONITORING

Gosfield School reviews its equal opportunities policy regularly. As part of that process, and to comply with the Department for Education, the registration form includes information about a pupil's country of birth, nationality (we use the same ethnic categories as the Government requires for the national census) and proficiency in English. This data is logged onto our database and the information used to complete the annual government census. Under no circumstances would we link our ethnic monitoring data with our pupil records.

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

In order to cope with the academic and social demands of Gosfield School, pupils should be fluent English speakers. In situations where this is not the case, an assessment of the impact of this upon the child's ability to access the curriculum and make satisfactory progress will inform next steps. Tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be arranged at the parent's expense.

REQUESTS FOR VARIATION IN THE SCHOOL UNIFORM

At Gosfield we do not select for entry on the basis of religious belief, and we welcome pupils of all faiths and offer the opportunity for individuals to practise their own faiths. However, parents should be aware that all pupils at Gosfield School are required to wear a uniform until Year 12, and that a strict "business dress" code operates for Years 12 and 13. The Principal will consider written requests from parents for variations in the uniform on religious grounds that are consistent with the School's ethos and its policy on health and safety. The Principal may take expert advice, and will normally arrange to meet with the parents to discuss the implications of such a request.

ADMISSIONS AND PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES, SEND AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

The school welcomes all children who can make the most of the opportunities offered and can flourish in its caring environment. The Governors, Principal and staff are firmly committed to inclusivity and to giving every child the best possible start in life. Treating every child as an individual is important and pupils with physical disabilities are welcome. Pupils, whose Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) and learning difficulties are suited to the curriculum, are also welcome provided that our Learning Support Department can provide them with the help and support that they require.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The School's selection policy is described in its Admissions Policy. Applications from all who have the ability and aptitude to access an academic curriculum are welcome. However, parents of children with physical disabilities, SEN or learning difficulties are advised to discuss their child's requirements with the school before proceeding with the application to enable the School to ascertain whether reasonable adjustments can be made. In some cases parents may be asked to provide a copy of a medical report or educational psychologist's report to help assess the child's needs.

BEFORE ENTRY

Each pupil with a disability and/or SEN requires special consideration and treatment. If adjustments need to be put in place, they will be discussed thoroughly with parents and their medical advisers, including adjustments that can reasonably be made to the curricular and extracurricular activities before their child becomes a pupil at the school.

BARRIERS TO LEARNING

The School recognises that social, emotional and behavioural barriers to learning can be associated with some disabilities. Mental illness or learning difficulties can cause behavioural issues. The School aims to work together with families to overcome or minimise these as far as is possible but the School's behaviour policy outlines expected behaviour and the sanctions in place to deal with breaches to this.

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

We are an inclusive school that welcomes members of the school community with disabilities and special educational needs. We maintain and drive a positive culture towards inclusion of disabled people and those with special educational needs in all the activities of the School and we will not treat a member of the school community less favourably on these grounds without justification. We will do all that is reasonable to ensure that the School's curriculum, ethos, culture, policies, procedures and premises are made accessible to everyone.

The School has an on-going duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs in respect of the education and associated services provided to ensure that such pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other pupils. This covers all aspects of school life. For example, the curriculum, classroom organisation and timetabling, access to school facilities, clubs and visits, school sports and school policies. Reasonable adjustments may typically include providing examination papers in larger print for a child with a visual impairment or rearranging the timetable to allow a pupil to attend a class in an accessible part of the building.

Parents and prospective parents of disabled children may wish to obtain copies of the School's accessibility plan from the School Office. This shows the ways in which the School plans to make the buildings progressively more accessible to disabled pupils, disabled parents and visitors. The school has an active monitoring policy and will do its best to make adjustments to take account of an individual pupil's needs, within the constraints imposed by its historic buildings, scattered site and resources. Facilities for wheelchair users will be incorporated into any new buildings or major redevelopment of existing buildings.

OTHER ADJUSTMENTS

Depending upon need, which is assessed by our SENCo, pupils may be allowed to use laptop computers and e-readers in class, and can be given large print or documents printed on glare-free paper if required.

Menus can be devised to cater for special dietary requirements.

AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES

The Equality Act is making significant changes to the law on discrimination as it affects disabled pupils and in particular the extension of duties on schools to include the provision of auxiliary aids and services (which has been effective from 1 September 2012). Further guidance from the DfE is currently awaited on this but the principal guidance is in the EHRC draft Code of Practice for Schools.

PUPILS WITH EDUCATIONAL HEALTH CARE PLANS AND CARERS

Pupils with EHC Plans from their local authorities who are suited to the School are welcome. If a pupil with a statement or EHC Plan requires their dedicated carer in school, for example, to assist with personal care, writing etc. this can be accommodated provided that the carer has an enhanced DBS check arranged by the School and complies with the safeguarding regime in force at the time. The School would require a carer (like a new member of staff) to sign a written agreement undertaking to comply with the School's safeguarding policies and to attend the safeguarding induction briefing that is given to all new members of staff before working unsupervised on site.

A pupil's dedicated carer is not a School employee and the pupil's parents would be asked to provide the School with a written undertaking indemnifying it from any legal responsibility or cost connected with the provision of their services to their child.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning Support is staffed by qualified specialists and experienced learning support assistants who are able to support each pupil with a specific learning difficulty.

Some disabled pupils may also require specialist support from Learning Support. This would normally be discussed with parents before their child enters the School. A specialist will assess pupils with identified or suspected learning difficulties at their parents' expense so that the areas that require support can be identified. Learning Support staff offer a combination of in-class, small group and one-to-one lessons. The School works closely with the pupil and their parents to help them to overcome the barriers that their difficulties present.

Learning Support will prepare an individual education plan for each child, setting achievable targets. The pupil, together with their parents and teachers, review the plan regularly and the pupil is encouraged to participate in their target setting in collaboration with their class teachers and the Learning Support staff.

ROLE OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS COORDINATOR (SENCo)

The SENCo has an important role at Gosfield. Working closely with all staff, both academic and pastoral, the SENCo plays a key role in determining the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision in the School in order to cater for the individual needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. The SENCo will liaise closely with the pupil's teaching staff, family and where appropriate, with the School's medical staff and with external agencies. The SENCo is suitably qualified and monitors changes to best practice, evidence-based resources and the use of suitable technology as well as to changes in legislation.

CHARGING POLICY

Whether or not it is appropriate to levy any further fees for additional support for individual pupils will be considered on a case-by-case basis, on the basis of what is reasonable.

STAFF TRAINING

All staff (including teaching and support staff) are given regular annual training on working with pupils with specific learning difficulties and disabilities by the SENCo. This training focuses on helping each child to reach their maximum potential, the appropriate adjustments (such as large print, e-readers, visual-friendly reading books and extra time) that can assist better access to the curriculum and facilities of the school to the greatest extent possible.

The School trains its teachers to differentiate within the curriculum and to take into account pupils' learning difficulties (as well as the needs of gifted and talented pupils). The SENCo liaises with the teaching staff about the most appropriate means of meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. The SENCo has an important role in ensuring consistency of approach by all teachers in providing, for example, access to learning materials that are easier to read, are visually more friendly and easier to understand, or extra time in exams, including public examinations where appropriate.

SCHOOL BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

Gosfield takes pride in its well-developed system of pastoral care for social interaction amongst pupils. All pupils are taught that victimisation and bullying are prohibited and will not be tolerated. The School's objective is to ensure that a disabled pupil, or a pupil with learning difficulties or other protected characteristic, does not suffer less favourable treatment as a result of discrimination.

Pupils are taught through the curriculum and other activities the importance of respecting each other and behaving towards each other with care, courtesy and consideration. The School's behaviour policies make clear the seriousness of bullying, victimisation and harassment in all its pernicious forms, including racial, religious, cultural, sexual, sexist, gender-related, sexual orientated homophobic, disabled and cyber, in causing serious psychological damage and even suicide.

Considerable teacher time is expended in preventing bullying, victimisation and harassment and in dealing with it when it occurs. All pupils understand that the School has a zero tolerance policy on bullying and that bullies can expect strong sanctions to be applied to them.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

The School's hope is that all parents will feel able to share any concerns about their child with their child's class teacher or tutor in order that a healthy partnership for the care of their child can be developed. The pastoral staff, teachers and medical staff who are involved with their child are always happy to discuss any parental concerns. A member of staff will always ask to see a parent if they felt that an adjustment to the curriculum or individual education plan followed by their child might be in their best interests, or if there was a specific concern.

COMPLAINTS

The School naturally hopes that a parent will not feel that they have cause to complain but its complaints policy is published on the website for any parent who wishes to use it. Additionally, all parents of children with specific learning difficulties or disabilities have the legal right to seek redress from the First Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) if they believe that their son or daughter has received unfavourable treatment.

The Board of Governors understands it is their responsibility to oversee, monitor and review this policy and to ensure its implementation.

