

INTRODUCTION

This policy is concerned with identifying the foundations on which to base the development and implementation of a code of good practice concerning Equal Opportunities throughout the school community. Effective implementation should involve all members of the school community.

This school community believes in the principle of freedom from discrimination for everyone including all those in protected groups.

Pupils and staff are encouraged to respect and recognise the worth of others, and to contribute positively towards the creation of good relationships.

At BSG we take our responsibilities seriously and seek to help every pupil and member of staff to feel a full member of the school community with all its responsibilities and opportunities and to fulfil their potential. As a school we strive towards being an inclusive community.

LEGAL BACKGROUND

The Equality Act 2010 replaced nine major Acts of Parliament and almost a hundred sets of regulations which had been introduced over several decades. It provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It simplifies the law by getting rid of anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time, and it extends protection against discrimination in certain areas.

The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- in relation to admissions
- in the way it provides education for pupils
- in the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service, or
- by excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The “responsible body” is the governing body in the case of an academy. In practice, any persons acting on behalf of the responsible body – including employees of the school – are liable for their own discriminatory actions, and the responsible body is also liable unless it can show that it has taken all reasonable steps to stop the individual from doing the discriminatory action or from doing anything of that kind.

The Act deals with the way in which schools treat their pupils and prospective pupils: the relationship between one pupil and another is not within its scope. It does not therefore bear directly on such issues as racist or homophobic bullying by pupils. However, if a school treats bullying which relates to a protected ground less seriously than other forms of bullying – for example dismissing complaints of homophobic bullying or failing to protect a transgender pupil against bullying by classmates – then it may be guilty of unlawful discrimination. The school’s liability not to discriminate, harass or victimise does not end when a pupil has left the school, but will apply to subsequent actions connected to the previous relationship between school and pupil, such as the provision of references on former pupils or access to “old pupils” communications and activities.

It is unlawful for a school to discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably because of their:

- sex
- race
- disability
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy or maternity.

It is unlawful to discriminate because of the sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment of another person with whom the pupil is associated. So, for example, a school must not discriminate by refusing to admit a pupil because his parents are gay men or lesbians. It would be race discrimination to treat a white pupil less favourably because she has a black boyfriend.

Taken from the Equality Act 2010 DFE advice for schools

RELATED POLICIES

A culture of inclusion must by necessity permeate all aspects of the life of our school.

This Equal Opportunities policy should therefore be read in conjunction with all other policy documents and in particular:

- Admissions
- Aims and objectives
- Attendance
- Behaviour and Discipline
- Curriculum
- Special Needs
- Pastoral Care and Guidance
- School uniform

OUTLINE OF RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE SCHOOL

All members of the school community have a responsibility for supporting an inclusive culture within school and ensuring that all pupils and staff have equal opportunities to fulfil their potential. The following members of staff have particular responsibilities:

Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team - overall responsibility for ensuring that policies are followed and upheld by all members of the school community, both staff and pupils.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator - overall responsibility for ensuring appropriate programmes of study are in place for pupils with special needs and are followed by all teachers.

Heads of House/Tutors - day to day responsibility for the pastoral care of all pupils and liaison with parents and carers.

Heads of Department and Subject Teachers - responsibility for ensuring that schemes of work are accessible to all pupils.

CURRICULUM

i. General

- We believe it is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that a positive commitment is made towards Equal Opportunities throughout the Curriculum. This includes the formal taught curriculum and the resources used to support it, together with the informal curriculum including interactions between pupils and between staff and non-teaching staff and pupils.
- Any advice to pupils on choosing subjects within the curriculum should always be factually accurate and unbiased.
- Pupils and all staff should learn to recognise discrimination based on disability or gender, sexism, racism and ageism whenever it occurs and challenge it in an appropriate manner.

ii. Implementation

- All members of the community need to be vigilant and aware that their actions and language can inadvertently reinforce prejudice and discrimination.
- The atmosphere and ethos of the school are important. Since many of the "incidents" will be unintentional we would like to encourage openness on everyone's part so that discussion takes place in a positive atmosphere based on mutual respect and trust.
- All pupils should be aware that the teacher has high expectations of them and should be continually challenged to reach higher standards.
- There needs to be a range of teaching styles, including those which foster motivation and a sense of personal worth by drawing on pupils' own personal experiences.
- When working together collaboratively in groups, pupils should learn from a diversity of cultural experiences, perspectives and view-points.
- On class outings and when receiving visiting speakers, pupils should learn from a diversity of experiences, perspectives and view-points.
- Staff are encouraged to follow agreed procedures (set out in Section 4 of this document) for dealing with racist, ignorant or insensitive comments by pupils during class discussions.

iii. The Selection and Use of Resources

- Stereotyping according to age, gender or race is to be avoided. Resources should reflect women/men, people of different ethnic origin in positive ways. Language bias should be challenged where it occurs.
- Existing resources and new stock should be reviewed with regard to gender or racial bias: by individuals, by departments and at a whole school level (e.g. Library). The aim is not to eliminate or "cleanse" stock but to recognise, challenge and discuss bias where appropriate.
- Displays of resources and pupils' work should reflect a multi-ethnic and multicultural society and world.
- Displays and resources (including worksheets, hand-outs, posters etc.) should contain positive, non-stereotypical and challenging images in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, culture, disability, age and religion.

ASSESSMENT

The purpose of assessment is to give supportive feed-back, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to encourage progress. We hope that the assessment framework at BSG ensures that all pupils have the opportunity firstly to maximise their potential and secondly to develop self-confidence by recognising their individual worth.

In order to achieve this it is BSG assessment policy that:

- Pupils will be involved in setting targets and in self-assessment, encouraging individual responsibility.
- Assessment and marking techniques are explained to the pupils so that they know how to interpret their marks and thus progress.

During this process it is important that:

- Neither the marks and grades obtained by the pupil nor the types of assessment tasks chosen by the teacher are influenced by unconscious expectations of gender or race.
- The language used at all stages of the process e.g. when discussing progress with pupils, reporting to parents, in written reports is unprejudiced and sensitive.

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

- Advertising should be carried out in such a way as to encourage applications from suitable candidates. This can be achieved by the appropriate wording of advertisements. Use of a job description with a discriminatory connotation must be avoided.
- All job opportunities should be advertised both internally and (if appropriately) externally at the same time. This will act as a means of information and the opportunity for applications from existing staff. Where appropriate, the possibility of job sharing should be considered.
- The governors are committed to ensuring that all job applicants are considered on a fair, unbiased and lawful basis and that no candidate or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sex or marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or those who are pregnant or on maternity leave.
- To ensure that the Equal Opportunities Policy is being carried out applications will be monitored in accordance with guidelines from the Commission for Racial Equality. The information collated will not be used for any other purpose and will be kept strictly confidential. The information given by candidates will be stored on a computer. Monitoring will be by means of a questionnaire sent out with all application packs.
- Where an internal candidate is not called for interview, a de-briefing session should be offered, arranged by a member of the selection panel. Internal and external candidates who attend interviews and do not get the post advertised should always be offered a personal de-briefing.
- Unsuccessful internal candidates should be offered the opportunity to discuss their personal development, and where appropriate, offered CPD opportunities.
- Opportunities to further personal development in other curriculum/pastoral areas should be open to all staff, and regarded as a positive step in their professional development. Appraisal should be directed towards staff development of this kind, as well as career development leading to promotion. Age limits for access to training and promotion should be eliminated.

- All members of staff, who either feel discriminated against with respect to staff appointments, working conditions and/or personal development, or have experienced harassment of any kind by another member of staff, should have the opportunity to discuss the issue with a member of staff of their choice.
- Should informal discussion about such an issue not prove satisfactory, all staff have the right to instigate the formal grievance procedure as set out in the relevant document, a copy of which can be found in the staff shared area.

HOW IS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL'S EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY MONITORED?

Impact assessments will be used to measure the effectiveness of the school's policies by using the following indicators:

- Annual review process with all post holders
- Annual special needs review involving pupils, parents and staff
- Statistics relating to examination success to identify individuals or groups of pupils who are not meeting their potential or who are particularly gifted
- Statistics relating to attendance to identify pupils with poor attendance
- Statistics relating to detentions and the use of exclusions to identify pupils at risk of disaffection
- Surveys to indicate uptake of extra-curricular activities amongst pupils
- Uptake of free school meals
- Statistics relating to employment of staff according to gender, disability and ethnicity
- Statistics relating to pupils according to disability and ethnicity
- Statistics relating to any reports of racist/sexist incidents
- Parental/pupil surveys.

The Governors' Staff and Student Committee has specific responsibility for monitoring the 'inclusiveness' of the school community and will report to the governing body on an annual basis on the effectiveness of the Equal Opportunities policy.

Where concerns arise the Governing Body will:

- consider alternatives to avoid adverse impact of school policies
- consider mitigation
- investigate further
- take lawful positive action.

CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

- All teaching and support staff, pupils and anyone else involved with members of Bournemouth School for Girls community in an official capacity should be aware of the school's Equal Opportunities Policy with its rejection of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation or age etc.
- The school community of Bournemouth School for Girls celebrates the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of its members. It is to be expected that any discriminatory comment of a general nature will be challenged immediately by those present.
- Intolerance of any sort which shows itself by offensive language and/or behaviour (for example name calling with racist or sexist overtones, racially motivated physical abuse or abuse of personal property, refusal to cooperate with others on the grounds of race or culture, and racist or sexist graffiti; sexual harassment involving physical assault or persistent unwanted physical contact, and/or overt or implicit verbal abuse) will be dealt with according to the procedure set out below.
- If anyone overhears/sees offensive language and/or behaviour as described above, they must first speak with the person offended against, offer support and enquire whether they wish the

incident/incidents to be followed up. If the answer is in the affirmative, the procedure should then be followed. In any case a brief record should be made.

- If a person discriminated against reports it to a member of staff (including support staff) then that member of staff should inform the Headteacher, and follow the procedure set out below.
- All incidents of discriminatory behaviour should be reported to the Headteacher who will keep a record of all such incidents and the action taken.
- The aim of this procedure should be to make all concerned aware of the effects of offensive behaviour whilst giving sympathetic support to all parties. It seeks reconciliation not punishment.

HOW TO PROCEED

1. Those concerned will meet to discuss the incident or incidents individually at first with an appropriate adult of their choice who could be a teacher, Head of House, Deputy Head or Bursar. Every attempt should be made to reach a conciliation which should take place in an open and positive manner.
2. If the aggrieved person feels dissatisfied with the outcome of a conciliation meeting, or if the offensive language/behaviour persists, then there will be further discussions involving the people concerned other adults, parents and the Headteacher as appropriate.
3. If the complainant remains dissatisfied the matter will be put in writing and referred to the Governing Body via the Chair of Governors who will be asked to convene a meeting of a Panel consisting of 3 members of the Governing Body. The persons referred to in 2 above will be invited to state their case at the meeting. The Panel will decide what action should be taken and their decision will be conveyed to those concerned as soon as possible after the meeting.
4. Should an appeal be lodged against the Panel's decision, it is the responsibility of the Governing Body to initiate an Appeals procedure in accordance with normal school practice, and to appoint an Appeals Panel whose decision will be final.

See also Grievance Policy.

Reviewed and ratified by FGB December 2022
Next review December 2024