



Hope Tree School
Where difference is valued

Equality and Diversity Policy 2025

Equality and diversity statement

Hope Tree School is committed to ensuring equality of provision and opportunity without discrimination for all students, staff, parents and carers, members of the Advisory Board and members of the wider community. We are committed to the fair treatment of all regardless of disability, gender reassignment, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.

Rationale:

In order to provide outstanding education, all staff at Hope Tree School are committed to the provision of equal opportunities for all. Our aim in writing this Policy is to ensure (to the best of our ability) that students and staff members with protected characteristics are enabled, supported and encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of school life, and to benefit from the school's facilities and activities to the same extent as those without protected characteristics.

We will take positive action to support those with protected characteristics, to eliminate unconscious biases and prejudices as well as overt discrimination, and to actively promote the 'fundamental British value' of mutual respect and tolerance. We also take action to support staff and students who have been subjected to discrimination or harassment in other settings.

We promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students at the school and of society as a whole, and prepare students at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. With this in mind, we encourage our students not only to refrain from discrimination and harassment, but to become active citizens who are committed to promoting equality and celebrate diversity.

Hope Tree School aims to improve its equality and diversity practice in relation to students, prospective students, employees, potential employees, and (where applicable) parents and visitors. We will meet our statutory duties in relation to the Equality Act 2010 through regular training, monitoring, policy review, consultation, and appropriate adjustments.

Legal Duties:

Hope Tree School recognises our duties under Equality Act 2010, which replaces all previous equalities legislation in the UK. In accordance with the Equality Act, we recognise our statutory responsibility to fulfil the three aspects of the Public Sector Equality Duty, namely to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity;
- Foster good relations between people with a protected characteristic and those who do not have the characteristic.

Hope Tree School actively promotes the fundamental British value of mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs (along with the other fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty) under the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2019. We further welcome our obligation, to provide "personal, social, health and economic education which... encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 [Equality] Act"

School Context:

Hope Tree School is a small independent school offering places to children from within the county of Cambridgeshire and neighbouring counties.

Scope:

This policy applies to all people at the school or involved with the school, including students, staff, members of the advisory board, parents, carers and members of students' families, members of our wider community, suppliers, companies who may hire our facilities, external professionals who are commissioned to work with our students and visitors to the school.

The provisions of the Equality Act 2010 prohibit schools from discriminating against, harassing or victimising:

- Prospective students in relation to admissions arrangements
- Students at the school
- Former students, where there is a continuing relationship based on the individual having been a student of the school.

Protected Characteristics:

We acknowledge that the 2010 Equality Act identifies seven protected characteristics that apply to both students and staff, namely:

- disability, defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities,
- gender reassignment, which we understand to include social transition as well as medical and surgical procedures for gender confirmation;
- race, which includes ethnicity, culture, national origin and national status,
- religion or belief, or the lack of religion/belief,
- sex,
- sexual orientation,
- pregnancy or maternity.

We further note that:

- a person's age is also a protected characteristic in relation to employment, but this does not apply to students in schools:
- 'marriage or civil partnership' is also a protected characteristic in relation to employment, but not in relation to students in schools.

Discrimination is defined in the Equality Act as being:

- Direct discrimination (including discrimination based on perception or association)
- Indirect discrimination
- Discrimination arising from disability
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person is treated because of a protected characteristic.

Discrimination based on association occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their association with someone (for example a parent, sibling or carer) who has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination based on perception occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they are thought mistakenly to have a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a provision criterion or practice is applied in the same way for all people or particular groups of people, but has the effect of putting people sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage.

Discrimination arising from a disability occurs when a person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability, and this treatment cannot be justified. By acting quickly and putting in place reasonable adjustments for disabled people, discrimination can and should be avoided.

Harassment, as described below, is unlawful under the Equality Act:

- Harassment related to a protected characteristic
- Sexual harassment
- Less favourable treatment of a person because they submit to or reject sexual harassment or harassment related to sex

The related protected characteristics for schools provision are:

- Disability
- Race
- Sex

Harassment occurs when unwanted behaviour, which is related to a protected characteristic, has the effect or purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Sexual harassment occurs when unwanted behaviour occurs which is of a sexual nature and has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Victimisation is defined by the Equality Act as treating someone badly because they have:

- Made a complaint or claim of discrimination
- Helped someone else make a claim by giving evidence or information
- Making an allegation that the school or someone else has breached the Equality Act
- Doing anything else in connection with the Equality Act

As is the case in other schools, the Equality Duty will be used by Hope Tree School to help policy making become more relevant to all groups of students and help the school identify priorities for action. The school knows that the duty applies to all policies, procedures and practices, and will use it proactively to identify issues and shape policies around the needs of different groups of students whose interests are protected by it.

Accordingly the School will make "reasonable adjustments" to accommodate the needs of different people, especially those with disabilities.

The overall responsibility for ensuring that the School does not breach the Equality Act 2010 lies with the School's proprietors. Individuals (including students) are responsible for ensuring that they do not break the law, and the School will work alongside students to ensure that they understand their rights and responsibilities in this regard.

Procedures:

The proprietors of Hope Tree School are liable for the actions of its employees and "agents" (which can include students) of the school, unless it can show that it took "all reasonable steps" to prevent the discrimination, harassment or victimisation from taking place. In some circumstances an employee or agent may be personally liable for acts of discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

It is the duty of the School to take steps to prevent employees or agents of the School from acting unlawfully, but it is the duty of the individual to make sure that they understand their personal liability.

Hope Tree School will actively work to foster good relations across all protected characteristics. The need to have "due regard" to equality consideration is a continuing one, so the School will monitor the success of initiatives, use statistical data for monitoring, track individual attainment, observe lessons and speak to students and parents and carers to gather useful information.

Students at Hope Tree School all have special educational needs. All students are autistic and process the world differently to neurotypical people. The School works tirelessly to improve outcomes and provide an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all learners.

Roles and Responsibilities:

All who work in the school have a responsibility for promoting equality and inclusion and avoiding unfair discrimination. Overall responsibility for overseeing equality practices in the school lies with the Head of Learning and Advisory Board.

Responsibilities include:

- Coordinating work on equality issues, including consultation with stakeholders and writing and reviewing the School Improvement Plan
- Dealing with reports of harassment
- Monitoring the progress and attainment of all groups of students, especially those considered to be vulnerable
- Monitoring exclusions

Specific responsibilities for other members of the school community are outlined below.

The Proprietors are responsible for:

- Treating all members of our school community with respect
- Ensuring that the school complies with all current Equality legislation, in particular the Equality Act 2010
- That this policy is adhered to

The Head of Learning is responsible for:

- Treating all members of our school community with respect
- Implementing the Equality and Diversity policy
- Ensuring that the policy is available and that staff, students, parents/carers and families know it is available on the School website
- Ensuring that this policy and its procedures are followed
- Producing regular information for staff and the Advisory Board about the policy and how it is working, and providing training for them as required
- Ensuring all staff know their responsibilities and receive training and support as appropriate
- Taking appropriate action in cases of harassment and discrimination

Staff are responsible for:

- Treating all members of our school community with respect
- Recognising contributions made by every student within the school
- Dealing with racist incidents, recognising and tackling bias and stereotyping
- Ensure that all incidents of a discriminatory nature are immediately challenged and recorded through the appropriate channels
- Logging all racist incidents in accordance with statutory guidance
- Promoting equality and good race relations and avoiding discrimination against anyone for reasons of disability, gender reassignment, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation
- Keeping up to date with the law on discrimination
- Ensuring that they are aware of the background of all students they teach or come into contact with
- Paying due regard to racial and cultural sensitivities of groups of students, and striving to incorporate diversity in a positive way which challenges stereotypes and assumptions

Parents/carers and families are:

- Expected to support the schools' Equality and Diversity policy
- Expected to support the sanction applied where a child has intentionally behaved in an unfair, unjust or discriminatory manner
- Work with staff to deliver a strong and consistent message about appropriate behaviour

Students are expected:

- To abide by this policy, in school and when travelling to and from school
- Report an incident of discrimination so that we can deal with the matter swiftly and efficiently

Our wider school community is expected:

- To be aware of and follow our Equality and Diversity policy

Public Examinations:

At the end of Key Stage 3, students are assessed to identify which exam access arrangements they are entitled to in order to allow them to access the assessment and remove, as much as possible, the disadvantages which are the result of their special educational needs or disabilities. The school will support the students and provide the necessary resources so that they are able to achieve the best possible outcome and fulfil their potential without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

Comments, compliments and complaints:

The School is always keen to receive feedback on all aspects of its work. Please use the normal methods of communication. Should you have a specific complaint, please contact the office for a copy of our complaints procedure. You can get a copy of our policy in a number of ways. It is available on our school website and a hard copy can be requested from the school office.

Related policies:

This policy will be read and reviewed in conjunction with all of our school policies, in particular the following:

- Accessibility Plan
- Equality and Diversity Policy (Staff)
- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy & Procedures
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- SEND Policy
- Staff Behaviour Policy

Monitoring:

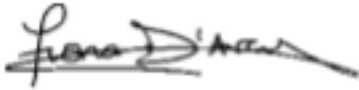
The impact of this policy will be monitored through annual reports given to the Advisory Board by the Head of Learning. This report will include details of any incidents such as bullying or racial harassment that are related to the duties of the Equality Act, and specifically to any protected characteristic.

The Equality and Diversity policy is supported by the Accessibility Plan which is updated annually and is monitored by the Advisory Board. Complaints and disputes will be resolved through the School's Complaints Procedure, and will be monitored and reported on regarding protected characteristics.



Signed:

Head of Learning



Head of Pastoral Care

Date: October 2025

Review Date: October 2026