

Overley Hall School Policy on Equality and Diversity

1.0 Statement

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and Equality Legislation requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Overley Hall School is committed to reviewing this policy annually to ensuring maintains a policy framework that is up-to-date with the most recent legislation. It adheres closely to The Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act became law in October, 2010 and ensures consistency in what employers and employees need to do to make their workplaces a fair environment and comply with the law.

Member of Staff Responsible: Proprietor, Head Teacher and Registered Care Manager

This policy will be monitored annually by the Head Teacher in conjunction with senior leaders and middle management.

The Head Teacher is committed to notifying Placing Authorities in writing if an investigation or proceedings are brought against the school under the equality or discrimination law.

2.0 School Context

The school is an independent special school who is willing to consider all children with special educational needs. Overley provides a person centred curriculum tailored to the young person's needs.

School accepts students from all authorities. Many of our students are from across Shropshire and Telford Wrekin although we have students from Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, Northamptonshire and Central Bedfordshire.

The school resides on a 12 acre plot which has two forest school areas, a walled garden with allotments. The site provides a calming environment for young people who have autism and complex needs.

The school provides education for children from 8years to 19 years. Our pupils have complex needs and most have autism and complex needs. Most pupils achieve significantly below age-related expectations. Most of our pupils have communication and/or speech and Language difficulties, social interaction difficulties, many having associated challenging behaviour and sensory impairments. A number have physical disabilities.

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Pupils come from a wide socio- economic range and many would qualify for free school meals – 71% currently

Attainment on entry is gained through school based assessment, records from previous schools, Education and Health Care Plans, Review documentation and moderation of work between staff

Overley Hall promotes a needs based driven curriculum developing communication skills, independent living skills and vocational skills. We make full use of the surrounding community.

2.0 Aim

This policy is drawn up in consideration of the Equality Act 2010 which protects individuals from discrimination and harassment based upon ‘protected characteristics’ the protected characteristics in respect of any person. Overley Hall School shall not discriminate directly or indirectly, or by way of victimisation or harassment, against any person on grounds of

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Colour
- Race, Ethnic Origin
- Nationality
- Language
- Religion or belief
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marital Status
- Age

This policy should be read in conjunction with Accessibility Policy and Plan. We also recognise the international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Convention of rights of People with Disabilities and the Human Rights Act 1998.

To create a fair school community that promotes equality, social inclusion, and respect for diversity, it will act upon discrimination and inequality. Equality of opportunity at Overley Hall School means providing equality and excellence for all in order to promote the highest possible standards. Equality of opportunity applies to all members of the school community; pupils, staff, senior leaders, parents and carers and community members.

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3.0 The core values and ethos of the Equality Policy are:

- Promote equality for all pupils and staff regardless of their disability or difference
- Promote positive attitude towards disability and differences
- To ensure that equality is an integral part of all planning and decision making within the school
- Support inclusion within the community and with family. To prepare pupils for life in a diverse society and world
- Support access to the curriculum
- Prevent discrimination, bullying and harassment. To acknowledge the existence of prejudice, and be proactive in tackling and eliminating discrimination
- To create an ethos which celebrate diversity and meet the diverse needs of our pupils and staff. A place where everyone, irrespective of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin or citizenship, feels welcomed and valued. Respect and value cultural, linguistic and religious diversity in the community. To ensure that issues related to equality and prejudice are recognised across all areas of school activity

4.0 Leadership

- All school policies reflect a commitment to equal opportunities
- The management team sets and models a clear ethos, which reflects the commitment to equality for all members of the school community
- Promotes positive and proactive approaches to valuing and respecting diversity
- The management team work in partnership with others to promote equality of opportunity to oppose prejudice and discrimination
- Teaching and curriculum development are monitored to ensure high expectations of pupils and appropriate breadth of content in relation to the school and the wider community
- Ensure any substantiated complaint aligned to this policy is referred to the Placing Authority Authorised Officer
- Monitor its employment functions (recruiting, short-listing, successful applicants, leavers, disciplinary hearings, grievances and access to training) by race, gender, disability and age.
- Ensure this policy is available to all stakeholders
- Ensure this policy is made as accessible as possible to people with disabilities and to people whose level of literacy in English is limited
- Will work with Placing Authorities who wish to carry out Equality Impact Assessments

5.0 The management will:

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- Ensure the aims and values show and promote a commitment to providing equality of opportunity
- Ensure this policy is publicised and provide learners and their representatives with the opportunity to have a copy upon request and/or access a relevant complaints process aligned to this policy
- Strive to ensure that its own staff reflects the communities, which the school serves, in terms of ethnicity, gender and class
- Ensure they receive up to date training and instruction in safe employment practices and procedures
- Ensure fairness when issuing budgets

6.0 Staffing: Safer Recruitment and Professional Development:

The management are:

- Committed to equality for all in the appointment, development, training and promotion of staff, and in all dealings with pupils and parents and carers of the school
- Committed to recognising the value of a diverse staffing
- Committed to working at all times within the requirements of anti-discrimination legislation and will promote equality positively across all systems and procedures
- Committed to fairness in all decisions, including advertising of vacancies, shortlisting, selection, induction, appraisal, training, development, promotion, terms and conditions of employment, dismissal and pay will be based on an objective and fair assessment of school requirements

The management are bound by law not to discriminate in certain groups. The Equality Act 2010 has brought together all the current discrimination laws into one and sets out the 'protected characteristics' that qualify for protection from discrimination as:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief

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- Sex and
- Sexual orientation

The management will:

- Give sympathetic consideration for requests for time off for religious observance although such time off will be unpaid and will be considered only subject to the operational requirements of the school
- Wherever possible make reasonable adjustments to recruitment processes, working conditions or the working environment, including terms and conditions of employment, to help overcome practical difficulties created by applicants and members of staff who have a disability
- Acknowledges these areas of regulation and confirms its commitment to enforce these statutory requirements in the school.

6.0 Advertising of vacancies:

- Vacancies will be advertised openly and will normally be available for members of staff in the school to apply.

7.0 Selection for appointment or promotion:

All decisions relating to appointments or promotions will be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- A detailed job description will be drawn up which accurately describes the duties of the position
- An objective and sufficiently detailed person specification will be defined from the job description
- Job descriptions, person specification and the selection criteria will be available to all candidates
- Shortlisting will be carried out against the selection criteria and a written record retained of the assessment of each candidate
- Selection decisions will be made against the agreed criteria and no other criteria will be used
- A written record of the selection decision relating to the agreed criteria will be retained
- Reasonable adjustments will be made to the recruitment and selection process where necessary to ensure that people with disabilities are enabled to compete for appointments in the school

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Specific Issues:

1. Age - The management are opposed to any direct or indirect discrimination based on age
2. Disability – The management are opposed to any discrimination against people with disabilities based on assumptions of their ability or otherwise carry out the duties of the post. Where a candidate who has a disability is appointment to the post in the school, reasonable provision will be made for adjustments to the working conditions or environment where this is practicable
3. Gender reassignment: The Governing Body is opposed to any discrimination as a result of a person proposing to undergo, undergoing or having undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex.
4. Marital status or civil partnership:
5. The management team is opposed to any discrimination against employees who are married or in a civil partnership.
6. Pregnancy and maternity: The management are opposed to any discrimination against a woman because of her pregnancy and / or maternity leave.
7. Race - The management are opposed to any direct or indirect discrimination based on race, colour, ethnic or national origin. There may be situations in the school which require special consideration and when an occupational requirement may apply to justify the employment of someone of one particular race or ethnic origin. Religion or Belief: The Governing Body is opposed to any direct or indirect discrimination based upon religion or belief. These will be exceptional circumstances
8. Sex - The management are opposed to any direct or indirect discrimination based on gender. There may be situations in the school, which require special consideration and where a genuine and determining occupational requirement may apply to justify the employment of someone of a particular sex. However, these situations will be unusual and exceptional, and will be discussed with the staff in advance.
9. Sexual orientation: - The management team is opposed to any direct or indirect discrimination based on perceived or actual sexual orientation.
10. Harassment or bullying - The management are opposed to any unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. The management are further opposed to any act of victimisation, harassment or bullying against any member of staff either by an employee or third party based on assumptions about their status in the above categories or any other grounds. Such action will be investigated in accordance with the school's procedure and may lead to formal disciplinary action.

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Non-statutory aspects:

Although there is no statutory requirement not to discriminate against any other groups, or characteristics of staff, the management will not discriminate against members of staff or applicants for posts on the grounds of their political affiliation.

8.0 Proactive Positive Action

The management recognises that the avoidance of discrimination is not sufficient to ensure that equality exists in the school; Therefore will give full consideration to measures of positive action which may assist in achieving the aims of this policy. This action is designed to encourage or facilitate the employment or training of minority or disadvantaged groups.

9.0 Fairness for all

The management will not discriminate in favour of individuals from specific groups (positive discrimination) but it will take positive action which enables members of those groups to compete on an equal basis. Positive action measures may include:

- Encouraging applicants from specific groups which are underrepresented in the school
- Encouraging people with disabilities to apply for posts
- Language / literacy training
- Supportive training measures for underrepresented groups
- Assistance with applications for candidates with language problems
- Commitments to interviewing disabled people who meet the basic criteria for the post
- Encouraging staff to become representatives of trade unions / associations.

10.0 Harassment and Grievance Procedures:

Harassment has the effect of destroying dignity and undermining the confidence of employees. It can take many forms, including physical contact, bullying, threatening or ignoring someone. It can be a series of offensive remarks or a single incident. It can be behaviour that staff find offensive even if not directed towards them or harassment because of perception or association. The management are committed to the principles of dignity at work for its entire staff in the school. This includes the right to be treated with respect by all managers and colleagues. The management will consider any acts of harassment including those on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital status and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex

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or sexual orientation, as unacceptable and outside the ethos and culture of the school. Any such act by a member of staff against any adult or child will be treated as a disciplinary offence, and action taken accordingly.

Overley Hall has procedures to resolve grievances and for the handling of complaints of harassment and bullying at work. The management are committed to investigate any such complaint. These procedures will be followed carefully and promptly. The first point of contact for any such complaint should be Bev Doran, Head Teacher (school) or Tracy Francis in Care, Lynn Thompson in House Keeping, Maintenance, Gardening or Catering, or in the case of a grievance against these managers, Mrs Anita Brown, Proprietor.

11.0 Monitoring

The school will keep records of existing staff and new applicants which can be analysed to provide data to assess whether equality is being demonstrated. The management will regularly monitor the effectiveness of its policy by the following methods:

12.0 Curriculum

The curriculum builds on pupils starting points and is differentiated appropriately to ensure the inclusion of:

- Boys and girls
- Pupils with a large range of diagnosis
- Pupils from ethnic minority groups
- Pupils who are looked after by the Local Authority
- Pupils learning English as an additional language

Wherever possible, the curriculum is planned to incorporate the principles of equality and to promote positive attitudes to diversity. All subjects contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.

The content of the curriculum reflects and values diversity. It encourages pupils to explore bias and to challenge prejudice and stereotypes. At least one week of each year is set aside for celebrating diversity

13.0 Teaching and Learning

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Teaching is responsive to pupils' different learning styles and takes into account of pupils' cultural backgrounds and linguistic needs.

Staff ensure that the classroom is an inclusive environment to ensure all pupils feel valued and know their contributions are valued.

All pupils have access to a curriculum that best meets individual needs, taking positive steps to include all groups or individuals.

Staff recognise the importance of displays and resources as a way of communicating with all school users and ensure they represent, promote, inform, support and celebrate all sections of the academy and wider community without bias, discrimination or stereotyping.

14.0 Partnerships with Parents and friends of Overley Hall:

1. Progress reviews to parents and carers are accessible and appropriate in order to ensure that all parents and carers have the opportunity to participate in the dialogue. Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school for an appointment at any time if they have concerns. Overley operates an open door policy
2. All parents and carers are encouraged to participate at all levels in the full life of the school for example, through parents support group meetings, assemblies, parents' evenings etc.
3. Overley Hall works in partnership with parents, carers and the community to develop positive attitudes to diversity and to address any specific incidents.
4. Overley Hall takes steps to encourage the involvement and participation of underrepresented groups of parents / carers and sections of the community.

12.0 Responsibilities:

1. The management and Head Teacher will ensure Overley Hall complies with all relevant equalities legislation.
2. The management and Head Teacher will ensure that the policy and relevant procedures and strategies are implemented.
3. The management and Head Teacher will ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities under the policy.

Monitor and Review: This policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that it does not disadvantage particular sections of the community. This policy will be given

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to all staff through normal management meeting mechanisms. This policy will also be made available to potential applicants for vacant positions in the school. This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Behaviour Support Policy
- Counter-Bullying Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- School Development plan
- Accessibility Policy
- Supporting Parents Policy
- Whole School Vision, Values and Ethos

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