

Packwood

Part of the Shrewsbury  
School Family



# Equal Opportunities Policy

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**The School:** Packwood School is an independent mainstream boarding and day school for girls and boys aged from 4 years to 13 years. The School is a registered charity, part of the Shrewsbury School Family. It holds a Christian ethos and welcomes staff, workers, volunteers, pupils, parents, applicants and governors from all different ethnic groups, backgrounds and creeds. The term **School Community** includes staff, governors, pupils, parents, visitors and volunteers.

**School's Position:** The School recognises the benefits of having a diverse School Community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Pupils will be taught to value and respect others. The School is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and is committed to equality of opportunity for all members of the School Community. In the provision of equal opportunities, the School recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination on the basis of:

- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief (including where an individual does not subscribe to a particular religion or belief)
- gender
- sexual orientation and (in the cases of adult members of the School Community)
- marital or civil partnership and age.

These are called the **Protected Characteristics**. The School also opposes all bullying and unlawful discrimination on the basis that a person has a special educational need (SEN) or learning difficulty, or because English is an additional language.

The School aims to ensure that all policies and practices conform with the principle of equal opportunities. The School will tackle inappropriate attitudes and practices through staff leading by example, through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, through the supportive School culture and through the School's policies. The RSE curriculum should offer children the opportunity to clarify and develop their attitudes and values relating to: gender roles, stereo typing, taking into account equality issues (sex, race and culture, disability, ability, religion and sexual orientation).

- **Related Policies:** This Equal Opportunities Policy is consistent with all of the School's policies, including the Admissions Policy; Behaviour and Discipline Policy; Suspension, Exclusion and Removal Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Disability Policy; Accessibility Plan and the Special Educational Needs Policy.

## **Policy Statement**

This policy applies to all members of the current and prospective School Community. There is a separate Equal Opportunities Policy for Staff in the Employment Handbook.

## **Policy aims**

Through the operation of this policy we aim to:

- communicate the commitment of the School to the promotion of equal opportunities;
- promote equal treatment within the School for all members of the School Community;
- create and maintain an open and supportive environment which is free from discrimination;
- foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the School;
- ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against any person on any ground listed in the School's Position paragraph;

- make it clear that, and ensure, that all discriminatory words, behaviour and images are treated as unacceptable;
- take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage.

## Forms of discrimination

**Types:** Discrimination may be direct or indirect, or arising from disability and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

**Direct discrimination:** Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic as set above. For example, rejecting an applicant of one race because it is considered they would not “fit in” on the grounds of their race would be direct discrimination.

Direct discrimination also occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic). For example, if a pupil is harassed or victimised because a sibling is disabled, this would be direct discrimination against that pupil.

**Indirect discrimination** – Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for example, their sex or race. For example, a minimum height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If these criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with gender, they would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of gender.

**Discrimination arising from disability** – Discrimination arising from disability occurs when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and the treatment cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. For example, where a pupil with cerebral palsy who is a wheelchair user is told they will be unable to attend a school trip because there is no wheelchair access available and other options are not investigated.

## Harassment

There are three types of harassment that are unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

**Harassment related to a relevant protected characteristic:** The relevant protected characteristics are disability, race and sex. Harassment occurs when a person engages in unwanted behaviour which is relevant to one of the relevant protected characteristics and which has the purpose or effect of:

- violating a pupil’s dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the pupil.

**Sexual harassment:** This occurs when a person engages in unwanted behaviour which is of a sexual nature and which has the purpose or effect of:

- violating a pupil’s dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the pupil.

## **Less favourable treatment of a pupil because they submit to or reject sexual harassment or harassment related to sex.**

### **Victimisation**

Victimisation means treating someone badly because they have done a “protected act” (or because the School believes that a person has done or is going to do a protected act). Treating a pupil less favourably because they have taken such an action will be unlawful victimisation.

A “protected act” is:

- making a claim or complaint of discrimination (under the Equality Act 2010 as set out above)
- helping someone else to make such a claim by giving evidence or information
- making an allegation that the School or someone else has breached the Equality Act 2010
- doing anything else in connection with the Equality Act 2010.

### **Admission**

**Applicants:** The School accepts applications from, and admits pupils irrespective of their Protected Characteristics and will not discriminate on these grounds in the terms on which a place is offered. The School will treat every application in a fair, open-minded way.

**Selection:** Every application will be considered on its merits within the School’s criteria for selection on grounds of the pupil’s ability and aptitude but this will not be done as a way of excluding pupils with a disability or special educational needs.

**Admissions Policy:** The School’s Admissions Policy reflects the School’s approach towards equal opportunities and is consistent with this policy.

### **Education and associated services**

**Equal access:** The School will afford all pupils equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects including all sports, irrespective of their Protected Characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and welfare.

**Positive action:** The School may afford pupils of a particular racial group, or pupils with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the special needs of the pupils in that group, for example additional support in the classroom for children with severe dyslexia.

**Exclusions:** The School will not discriminate against any pupil by excluding him or her from the School or by subjecting him or her to any other detriment, on the grounds of his or her gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or special educational needs.

**Teaching and School materials:** Efforts are made to recognise and be aware of the possibility of bias (for example, gender or racial), so that this can be eliminated in both the School’s teaching and learning materials and teaching styles. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum so as to avoid stereotypes and bias.

**Pupil interaction:** All pupils are encouraged to work and play freely with, and have respect for, all other pupils, irrespective of their Protected Characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered towards all groups in society through the curriculum and ethos of the School, and pupils will be encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.

**Bullying:** The School will not tolerate bullying or cyberbullying for any reason. The School’s Anti-bullying Policy contains more details about the School’s anti-bullying practices.

## School Uniform

The School uniform applies equally to all pupils, irrespective of their gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. However, the School will consider reasonable requests to alter the School uniform, for example, for genuine religious requirements and reasonable adjustments for disabled children.

**Symbols of faith:** Certain items of jewellery, such as a cross or the Kara bangle, and certain items of headwear, such as the turban and headscarves may be worn by pupils when doing so is genuinely based on manifesting religious or racial beliefs or identity. This is subject to considerations of safety and welfare.

**Disabled pupils:** Reasonable adjustments may be required to the School uniform for disabled pupils who require them. The pupil or his or her parents should refer the matter to the Head to ensure all reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate the pupil.

## Religious belief

The School's religious ethos, services and school timetable are set in accordance with the Christian tradition, but the School respects the right and freedom of individuals to worship in accordance with other faiths, or no faith.

## Disability and special educational needs

**Our approach:** We are an inclusive School which 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 need 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. Our Disability Policy and Policy on Special Educational Needs are consistent with this policy. For a copy of these policies, please contact the Deputy Head.

**Definitions:** Children have Special Educational Needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a "substantial and long term adverse effect" on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activity (Equality Act 2010). For further clarification, please refer to the policies mentioned above.

**Reasonable adjustments:** The School has an on-going duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled pupils with special educational needs in respect of education and associated services provided to ensure that such pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other pupils. This is a broad expression that 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:

- making arrangements for a child in a wheelchair to have his or her lessons in classrooms that he or she can access
- allowing extra time for a dyslexic child to complete an exam
- providing examination papers in larger print for a child with a visual impairment

- providing a live speaker for a child with hearing impairment in listening tests
- arranging a variety of accessible sports activities.
- many other reasonable adjustments are outlined in the Special Educational Needs Policy.

The School is not legally required to make adjustments which include physical alterations such as the provision of a stair-lift or new ground floor facilities, or a new library.

In making 'reasonable adjustments' the School is required to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils. The School will carefully consider any proposals made by parents and will not unreasonably refuse any requests for such aids and services.

**Informing the School:** In accordance with the School's terms and conditions, parents of pupils must notify the Head if they are aware or suspect that the pupil (or prospective pupil) has a disability or if special arrangements may be needed in relation to the pupil (or prospective pupil). Parents will be asked to provide copies of all written reports and other relevant information. Providing the School with such information of this kind will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis where it is necessary for members of staff to be informed of any particular vulnerability of a pupil. The School will have due regard to any request by a parent or pupil (who has sufficient understanding of the nature and effect of the request) to treat the nature or existence of the person's disability as confidential.

**Admission of children with special educational needs and/or a disability:** Applications for a place at the School will be considered on the basis that reasonable adjustments (see definition above) have been made by the School in order to cater for the child's special educational needs and/or disability. The School will not offer a place if, after reasonable adjustments have been made, the School will not be able to provide adequately for the pupil's physical and educational needs. The School shall inform the parents of their decision and give details of the reasonable adjustments they are going to make or give reasons why an offer of a place has not been made.

**Existing pupils:** Where the School becomes aware of a disability or special educational need of an existing pupil, the School will do all that is reasonable to assist the pupil whilst at the School, which may include making reasonable adjustments. If in the professional judgement of the Head, and after consultation with the parents and the pupil (where appropriate), the School cannot provide adequately for the pupil's physical and educational needs after all reasonable adjustments have been made, parents will be asked to withdraw the pupil, without being charged fees in lieu of notice and with the acceptance deposit returned. The School will do what is reasonable to help parents to find an alternative placement which will provide their child with the necessary environment and level of teaching and support.

**Access:** The School will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether disabled users of the premises are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and proportionate, the School will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises. The School has an Accessibility Plan, which is kept under review and revised as necessary. The Plan is available on request from the Deputy Head.

**SENCO:** The School has a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Mrs Susan Rigby. She also has responsibility for the EYFS.

### **Pupils with statements of special educational needs**

The School's Policy on Special Educational Needs includes details about the welfare and educational provision for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs.

## **Pupils with English as an additional language**

Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) will receive additional learning support if necessary. The School will consult with the pupil and the parents as appropriate. The School has appropriate welfare support for all such pupils through the supportive boarding culture.

## **Provision for pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs**

The School will make individual provision for such pupils where necessary and in accordance with this policy.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of the School Community are expected to comply with this policy and therefore to treat others with dignity at all times.

**Overall responsibility:** The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the effective operation of the School's Equal Opportunities Policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination.

## **Review**

The Deputy Head is responsible for reviewing whether the aims of this Policy are carried out throughout all areas of the School and taking appropriate action where necessary. This policy is reviewed by the Deputy Head and recommendations for any amendments are reported to the Governing Body.

## **Reporting and recording incidents of discrimination**

**Questions about this policy:** If you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Deputy Head.

**Complaints:** If you believe that you have received less favourable treatment on any of the unlawful grounds listed above, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to your detriment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the School's formal Complaints Procedure. For a copy of the School's Complaints Procedure, please contact the Deputy Head. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the complaints procedure.

**Reports:** If you would like to report a breach of this policy that does not constitute a complaint, please contact the Deputy Head.

**Enforcement:** We will treat seriously and urgently investigate every complaint and report. Disciplinary action may be taken against any member of the School Community who is found to have acted in contravention of this policy.

**Record:** All reported breaches of this policy will be recorded and this record will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Head.

## **Publication**

This policy will be published on the School Website.