
Equal Opportunities Policy

This non-contractual policy details the commitment of Oundle School (OS) and Laxton Junior School (LJS) (together “the School”) to equal opportunities and equal treatment.

The Policy may be amended by the School from time to time as appropriate, for example in order to incorporate changes in law or in line with good practice. The Human Resources department will ensure this policy is regularly reviewed by the Leadership Team and that key changes are highlighted and communicated as appropriate.

Relevant legislation: Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Equality Act 2010,

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Recruitment and Checks Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Disciplinary and Grievance Policies, Dignity at Work Policy, IT Acceptable Use Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

1. Our values and commitment

- 1.1. Pupils and staff are at the heart of what the School values and central to every decision made.
- 1.2 The School is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination on any grounds.
- 1.3 Furthermore, the School is committed to the elimination of unconscious bias, promoting an ethos of inclusion, respect for others and celebrating diversity in all its forms throughout the School community. Reasonable consideration of requests to support diversity will always be considered.

2. The law

- 2.1. It is unlawful to discriminate against or harass others because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because of a person’s marital or civil partner status. These are known as “**Protected Characteristics**”.
- 2.2. It is unlawful for an employer to fail to make reasonable adjustments to its requirements, working practices or the physical features of the workplace where these put a disabled job applicant or member of staff at a substantial disadvantage.

3. Scope

- 3.1. The School aims to encourage, value and manage diversity ensuring that staff achieve their full potential and employment decisions are taken without reference to discriminatory criteria. This policy is intended to assist the School to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that staff do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.
- 3.2. This policy equally applies to staff obligations around the treatment of pupils, customers, parents, visitors and members of the public, both in and outside of the work environment. Staff with managerial responsibilities should seek advice from the Human Resources department if they have any doubts about the application of this policy.
- 3.3. Members of staff should report any bullying or harassment by customers, suppliers, visitors or others to their manager who will take appropriate action. The School has a separate “Dignity at Work” policy.

4. Types of unlawful discrimination

- 4.1. **Direct discrimination** is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.
- 4.2. **Indirect discrimination** is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied to everyone but is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 4.3. **Associative discrimination** is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- 4.4. **Perceptive discrimination** is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic when they do not, in fact, have that protected characteristic.
- 4.5. **Victimisation** occurs where a member of staff is subjected to a detriment because they made or supported a complaint in good faith, or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, staff are not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint in bad faith.
- 4.6. **Harassment** this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment and Sexual Harassment is dealt with further in our Dignity at Work Policy.

5. Equal opportunities in employment

- 5.1 The School will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and termination (which includes selection for redundancy). The recruitment process will be conducted in line with its Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures and in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the role in terms of relevant experience, abilities and qualifications, as well as to meet the School's compliance requirements.
- 5.2 Job Descriptions and Person Specifications will outline those requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability.
- 5.3 Opportunities for training and development of staff will be made available to both full time and part time staff.

6. Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

- 6.1 Disability is defined as a mental or physical condition that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long term means that the condition must generally last, or be likely to last, for more than 12 months.
- 6.2 The School will make reasonable adjustments to assist in the application and interviewing process where a disability has been identified by potential applicants and will assist members of staff with a disability to participate in training and development activities.
- 6.3 The School aims to take reasonable steps, within the resources available, to develop an environment that reduces barriers in order to enable disabled persons to participate in all aspects of School life on equal terms.
- 6.4 The School will consider making any reasonable adjustments to either the work environment or working processes that affect a disabled member of staff in accordance with the duties specified under the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.5 Reasonable adjustments are made after consultation with the individual, line manager, a member of the HR department and any relevant external bodies.
- 6.6 The School recognises that some of its historic listed buildings present access problems for people with mobility issues. The School's access audit identifies and prioritises accessibility issues and links to all future planning activities. All future new buildings will be designed with accessibility in mind.
- 6.7 All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and not to discriminate against other members of staff and people working on behalf of the School.

7. Individual Responsibilities

- 7.1 Every member of staff is required to assist the School to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination.
- 7.2 Members of staff can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the School for any act of unlawful discrimination. Members of staff who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.
- 7.3 Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against staff or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

8. Complaints

- 8.1 All allegations of discrimination will be investigated and dealt with promptly and sensitively. Confidentiality will be maintained to the maximum extent possible. The School will not ignore, or treat lightly, grievances or complaints of unlawful discrimination.
- 8.2 If an individual considers that they may have been unlawfully discriminated against, they may use the School's Grievance Policy and Procedure to make a complaint. If the complaint involves bullying or harassment, they should also refer to the School's Dignity at Work Policy. The employee always has the right to seek independent advice from bodies such as ACAS.
- 8.3 Individuals will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if that grievance is not upheld, unless the complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.
- 8.4 Staff should refer to the School's Whistleblowing Policy and procedure if they have a reasonable belief that there has been an act of wrongdoing as described in paragraph 1.4 of that policy.

9. Monitoring and review

- 9.1 This policy will be monitored periodically by the School to judge its effectiveness and will be updated as required, including in accordance with changes in the law. The School will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions, working practices and pay policies in order to assess whether equal opportunity is being achieved. If changes are required, the School will implement them.

10. Training

- 10.1 The School will provide training in equal opportunities to managers and others likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise, with the objective of eliminating bias.
- 10.2 The School will provide training to all existing and new members of staff and others engaged to work at the School to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under this Policy and the Dignity at Work Policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment, promoting an inclusive and supportive environment.

- 10.3 The School will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

11 Data Protection

- 11.1 The School treats personal data collected for reviewing equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection and in the course of employment in accordance with its Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice for applicants and staff. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is outlined in the School's Applicant Privacy Notice available on the School's website and the Staff Privacy Notice accessible from the Staff Handbook.

Reviewer	AN
Post of Reviewer	Director of HR
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Next Review (max. 3 years)	June 2026