



RUGBY SCHOOL

## **Equal Opportunities Policy (Students)**

Lent 2026

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Rugby School (the School) is an independent mainstream boarding and day school for girls and boys aged 13 to 18 years. The School is a registered charity with a Christian ethos and welcomes staff, workers, volunteers, students, parents, applicants and governors from all ethnic groups, backgrounds, and beliefs. For the purpose of this policy, the *School Community* includes staff, governors, students, parents, visitors and volunteers.

1.2 Promoting equality of opportunity, dignity and respect is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Rugby School. The School is committed to fostering an inclusive environment in which all members of the School Community feel valued, supported and able to participate fully in School life.

1.3 The School recognises that unlawful discrimination may occur in a number of ways, including:

- **direct discrimination**, where a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic or because it is perceived that they have such a characteristic.
- **indirect discrimination**, where a provision, criterion or practice applies to everyone but places individuals who share a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage.
- **discrimination arising from disability**, where a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability, unless this can be objectively and lawfully justified.

Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional. Harassment and bullying in all forms, including cyberbullying, are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Allegations of bullying are addressed in accordance with the *Rugby School Counter-Bullying Policy*.

1.4 The School recognises the educational, social and cultural benefits of a diverse School Community in which individuals respect one another and the different contributions each person can make. Students are taught, through the curriculum and wider School life, to value difference and to treat others with courtesy, fairness and respect. The School is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and is promoting equality of opportunity for all members of the School Community.

1.5 In fulfilling this commitment, the School recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and opposes unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of the following protected characteristics:

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief (including a lack of religion or belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

- Marital or civil partnership status and age (in the case of adult members of the School Community).
- 1.6 These are referred to in this policy as the *Protected Characteristics*. The School also opposes all bullying and unlawful discrimination arising from special educational needs, learning difficulties or disabilities (SEND), or because English is an additional language.
- 1.7 The School aims to ensure that all policies, procedures and practices conform to the principles of equality and inclusion. The School will tackle inappropriate attitudes and practices through strong leadership, staff acting as role models, the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme, the wider curriculum, and the School's supportive culture and policies. The School actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

## **2.0 Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all current and prospective members of the School Community. All members of the School Community are expected to comply with this policy and treat others with dignity, fairness and respect at all times.
- 2.2 The School expects the highest standards of conduct in relation to equality and inclusion. Staff at the School, particularly those in positions of leadership or management, have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example, and actively promote the School's commitment to equal opportunities through their professional practice, decision-making, and interactions with others.
- 2.3 Matters relating to equality of opportunity in employment, including the recruitment and selection, are address separately within *the Rugby School Group Equal Opportunities Policy*, which is available via the Employee Self Service platform. This policy should be read alongside the present policy where relevant.
- 2.4 Parents are expected to support the aims of this policy and to uphold the School's ethos of tolerance, respect and inclusion in their engagement with the School and with other members of the School Community.

## **3.0 Policy Aims**

- 3.1 Through the effective operation of this policy, the School aims to ensure that equality of opportunity, inclusion and respect are embedded in all aspects of School life.
- 3.2 In particular, this policy seeks to:
- Clearly communicate the School's commitment to promoting equal opportunities for its students and wider School Community.
  - Ensure compliance with the School's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of any protected characteristic.

- Promote fair and equitable treatment for all members of the School Community.
- Create and sustain an open, inclusive and supportive environment in which all individuals feel safe, respected and valued.
- Foster mutual tolerance, understanding and positive attitudes, enabling students to develop respect for difference and diversity.  
Identify, remove or minimise barriers to participation and inclusion where they exist.
- Make it clear that, discriminatory language, behaviour and imagery are unacceptable and will be addressed appropriately.
- Take reasonable steps to avoid placing disabled people at a substantial disadvantage, in accordance with the School's duty to make reasonable adjustments.

#### **4.0 Admissions**

- 4.1 The School is committed to ensuring that its admission processes are fair, transparent and consistent with the principles of equality of opportunity. All applications are considered in an open-minded manner, having due regard to the School's duty to make reasonable adjustments and to considerations of welfare and safety.
- 4.2 The School welcomes applications from, and admits prospective students, irrespective of any Protected Characteristic. Decisions relating to admission, and the terms on which places are offered, are made without unlawful discrimination and in accordance with this policy and the *Rugby School Admissions Policy*.
- 4.3 Admissions decisions are based on the School's published selection criteria, including academic ability and aptitude, and on the extent to which the School can meet a student's educational and pastoral needs. These criteria are applied fairly and are not used to exclude students with a disability or special educational needs. Each application is considered on its individual merits.
- 4.4 In accordance with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the School will give careful consideration to what reasonable adjustments may be required to enable a prospective student with a disability or special educational needs to participate fully in the admissions process and, if admitted, in School life. The School will work in partnership with parents and, where appropriate, with the prospective student and relevant professionals to inform this process.
- 4.5 The School recognises the importance of widening access to a Rugby School education. Means-tested bursaries are available for applicants who meet the School's admissions criteria and qualify through the Arnold Foundation, the Lawrence Sheriff Foundation and/or through scholarship awards. Details of bursary provision are set out in the *Rugby School Admissions Policy*.
- 4.6 The *Rugby School Admissions Policy* reflects and supports the School's commitment to equality, inclusion and diversity, and should be read alongside this policy.

#### **5.0 Education and Associated Services**

- 5.1 The School is committed to ensuring that all students are able to access the education and associated services it provides, including the curriculum, pastoral support, co-curricular

activities, facilities and resources. Subject to the School's duty to make reasonable adjustments and to considerations of safety and welfare, students are afforded access irrespective of any protected characteristic. The School will not unlawfully discriminate against a student by excluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

5.2 In fulfilling this commitment, the School will:

- Treat all members of the School community with respect and dignity and seek to provide a positive working and learning environment free from discrimination.
- Endeavour to meet the individual educational and pastoral needs of students and to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristic.
- Ensure that students with English as an additional language and pupils with an Education Health Care Plan receive appropriate educational and welfare support.
- Monitor the admission, participation and progress of students from a range of backgrounds in order to identify and address any potential barriers to inclusion.
- Challenge promptly and effectively any discriminatory, prejudicial or inappropriate behaviour by students or staff.
- Encourage students to work, socialise and participate fully in School life with respect for others, irrespective of any protected characteristic.
- Provide all students with access to the full breadth of the curriculum and a wide range of co-curricular activities, subject to considerations of safety and welfare.
- Work in partnership with parents, and, where appropriate, external agencies to support inclusion and to prevent discrimination.
- Review, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive practices and related policies on a regular basis.

5.3 The School uses the taught curriculum and wider School life, including PSHE, Chapel and assemblies, to:

- Promote mutual respect, understanding and tolerance, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Promote positive and diverse role models and representations in order to challenge prejudice and raise awareness of equality related issues.
- Encourage students to reflect critically on assumptions and stereotypes, enabling them to recognise and challenge discriminatory behaviours and bias.

5.4 The School may afford students of a particular racial group, or students with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the special needs of the students in that group, for example, special language training for groups whose first language is not English. Such provision is intended to promote equality of opportunity and to support full participation in School life.

5.5 The School does not unlawfully discriminate against any student by excluding them from the School or by subjecting them to any other detriment on the grounds of their sex, gender

reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, or special educational needs, subject to the *Religious Belief* section of this policy.

- 5.6 The School recognises the importance of identifying and addressing both conscious and unconscious bias. Teaching and learning materials, teaching approaches and pastoral practices are kept under review to ensure that they do not reinforce stereotypes and that they reflect the diversity of wider society.
- 5.7 Through the House, curriculum, co-curriculum and the ethos of the School, students are encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards others and to show respect and consideration in their interactions, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Students are supported to develop the confidence and understanding needed to question stereotypes and to contribute positively to an inclusive School community.

## **6.0 School Uniform**

- 6.1 The School's expectations in relation to uniform are set out in the *Guidelines for Life at Rugby School*, which are consistent with the principles of equality and inclusion contained in this policy. The uniform requirements apply equally to all students, irrespective of any protected characteristic, subject always to considerations of safety, welfare and the School's duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- 6.2 The School recognises that, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate to make adjustments or allow variations to the School uniform. Reasonable requests will be considered where they arise from:
- genuine religious observance or belief.
  - disability or medical need.
  - other circumstances where an adjustment is required in order to avoid placing a student at a substantial disadvantage.

Any such requests will be considered on an individual basis, taking account of the School's health and safety requirements, the integrity of the uniform policy, and the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

- 6.3 In particular, the School may permit the wearing of certain items of jewellery or headwear, including items such as the Kara bangle, turbans or headscarves, where this is a genuine manifestation of religious or cultural identity. Such permission is subject to considerations of safety and welfare and to the principles underpinning the School's uniform requirements.
- 6.4 Where a student has a disability, the School will consider and implement reasonable adjustments to the uniform where necessary to ensure that the student is not placed at a substantial disadvantage. Requests for such adjustments should be discussed with the School so that appropriate arrangements can be agreed.
- 6.5 Where there is uncertainty regarding the appropriateness of a particular item or proposed adjustment, the matter should be referred by the student or their parents to the Deputy Head

for consideration. Decisions will be made reasonably, proportionately and in accordance with this policy and the School's *Complaints Procedure*.

## **7.0 Religious Belief**

- 7.1 Rugby School has a Christian ethos, and its worship, services and aspects of the School timetable are rooted in the Christian tradition as expressed through the doctrine of the Church of England. At the same time, the School is inclusive in its outlook and respects the rights and freedoms of individuals to hold, practise or manifest other religious beliefs, or to hold no religious belief at all.
- 7.2 The School will take all reasonable and proportionate steps, consistent with its ethos and with considerations of safety and welfare, to enable members of the School Community to observe their religious practices where appropriate. Requests relating to religious observance are considered sensitively and on an individual basis, in accordance with the School's policies and its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
- 7.3 Through its governance, leadership and daily practice, the School actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. These values are reinforced through the curriculum, pastoral structures, assemblies, Chapel and wider School life.

## **8.0 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

- 8.1 Rugby School is an inclusive School which welcomes members of the School Community with disabilities and special educational needs. The School is committed to fostering a positive culture of inclusion and to enabling students with SEND to participate fully in all aspects of School life. The School will not treat any member of the School Community less favourably on these grounds of disability or special educational need without lawful justification. The School will do all that is reasonable to ensure that its curriculum, ethos, culture, policies, procedures and premises are accessible. The *Rugby School Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy* should be read alongside this policy.
- 8.2 A student has special educational needs where they are identified as having a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A disability is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as 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.
- 8.3 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students and students with special educational needs so that they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other students. This duty applies across all aspects of School life, including (but not limited to):
- the curriculum and assessment
  - classroom organisation and timetabling
  - access to School facilities and premises

- co-curricular activities, clubs and educational visits
- sport and physical education
- School policies and procedures

8.4 Reasonable adjustments may include, for example:

- making arrangements to ensure accessible interview or assessment locations
- allowing additional time or alternative formats for assessments or examinations
- providing learning materials in accessible formats
- adjusting timetables or classroom locations
- offering appropriate alternative or adapted sporting activities.

8.5 Where reasonable adjustments are required, the School will consider the provision of auxiliary aids and services as appropriate. The School will work in partnership with parents and, where appropriate, with the student and relevant external professionals. Decisions will be made carefully, proportionately and with regard to the resources available to the School, and requests will not be reasonably refused.

8.6 In accordance with the School's terms and conditions, parents are expected to inform the School, at the earliest opportunity, if they are aware or suspect that their child has a disability or a special educational need. This information enables the School to consider what reasonable adjustments or support may be required. Relevant information will be treated sensitively and confidentially and shared only on a need-to-know basis. The School will give due regard to any reasonable request to treat information relating to a student's disability or special educational need as confidential.

8.7 Applications for admissions are considered on the basis that reasonable adjustments may be made to support a student's disability or special educational needs. Where, after careful consideration and consultation, the School concludes that it would not be able to provide adequate support even with reasonable adjustments, the School will explain its decision to parents clearly and transparently.

8.8 Where the School becomes aware of a disability or special educational need of an existing student, the School will work collaboratively with parents and the students to provide appropriate support. If, after all reasonable adjustments have been explored, the School determines that it cannot adequately meet the student's needs, the matter will be addressed sensitively and in partnership with parents, with the School offering reasonable support to assist in identifying an alternative placement where appropriate.

8.9 The School keeps the accessibility of its premises under review and considers whether disabled users may be placed at a substantial disadvantage. Where reasonable and proportionate, the School will take steps to improve access.

8.10 The School maintains an *Accessibility Plan*, which is reviewed and updated regularly. The Plan is available on the School website or on request to the Deputy Head.

8.11 The School has a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCO) and a Deputy Head (Middle School and Inclusion) who oversee the co-ordination of SEND provision and support staff, students and parents.

## **9.0 Students with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**

9.1 The School's approach to supporting students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is set out in the Rugby School SEND Policy. In accordance with its statutory duties, the School will consider each student's individual needs and, where appropriate, make reasonable adjustments and provide support within the context of its resources, policies and overall educational provision. The School works in partnership with parents and, where relevant, external professionals to review and monitor arrangements for students with an EHCP.

## **10.0 Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

10.1 Students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are supported in accessing the curriculum and wider School life. Where appropriate, additional learning support is provided following consultation with the student and the parents. Pastoral support for EAL students is embedded within the School's House system and wider pastoral structures.

## **11.0 Provision for Students with Particular Religious, Dietary, Language or Cultural Needs**

11.1 The School recognises that students may have particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs and is committed to supporting these where it is reasonable and appropriate to do so.

11.2 Individual provision will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the needs of the student, the views of parents, the School's ethos, and considerations of safety, welfare and practicality. The School will seek, where possible, to make reasonable and proportionate arrangements to enable students to participate fully in School life.

11.3 Such provision may include, where appropriate, reasonable adjustments to:

- catering arrangements and dietary provision
- opportunities for religious observance
- language support to assist access to the curriculum
- pastoral or practical arrangements that support cultural inclusion.

11.4 Requests for individual provision are considered sensitively and in accordance with the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The School will work in partnership with students and parents and, where appropriate, with external agencies, to support inclusion while maintaining the School's standards, routines and safeguarding responsibilities.

## **12.0 Responsibilities**

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

- 12.2 The Governing Body has overall responsibility for ensuring the effective operation of the *Rugby School Equal Opportunities Policy* and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework relating to equality and non-discrimination. In fulfilling this responsibility, the Governing Body provides appropriate oversight and challenge.
- 12.3 The Governing Body has delegated responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy to the Deputy Head, who is responsible for ensuring that the policy is accessible, implemented consistently, kept under review and updated as necessary.
- 12.4 Senior leaders and managers are responsible for promoting the principles of this policy in practice, supporting staff and students, and ensuring that concerns relating to equality are addressed promptly and appropriately.

### **13.0 Monitoring and Review**

- 13.1 The School monitors the effectiveness of this policy to ensure that it is operating fairly, consistently and in accordance with its legal obligations. Monitoring informs continuous improvement and supports the School's commitment to equality, inclusion and student well-being.
- 13.2 As part of the admissions process, the School monitors information relating to applicants' sex, race, disability and religion or belief on a confidential basis. This information is held and reviewed in anonymised form and is used solely for the purposes of identifying trends, evaluating the fairness of admissions processes and informing policy review.
- 13.3 The Deputy Head is responsible for the implementation of this policy and will review its operation periodically to ensure it remains effective and compliant with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements. This will include consideration of:
- admissions and selection data
  - reported incidents or concerns relating to discrimination or inequality
  - identifiable patterns or emerging issues
  - feedback from students, parents and staff
  - the effectiveness of related policies, training and support.
- 13.4 The Deputy Head reports to the Governing Body on the operation and effectiveness of this policy at least annually. The Governing Body uses this information to provide oversight, assurance and challenge, and to inform strategic decision-making.
- 13.5 This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, inspection requirements and best practice.

### **14.0 Reporting and Recording Incidents of Discrimination**

- 14.1 Any member of the School Community who has any questions about the content or application of this policy, or who wishes to raise a concern, may contact the Deputy Head for guidance and support.

- 14.2 Where an individual believes that they have been subjected to less favourable treatment on any unlawful ground, or that this policy has been breached to their detriment, they are encouraged to raise the matter through the School's formal *Complaints Procedure*. The School's Complaints Procedure is available on the School website and sets out the process for investigation and resolution. All complaints are handled sensitively and, so far as possible, confidentially.
- 14.3 Concerns or reports relating to potential breaches of this policy that do not amount to a formal complaint may be raised informally. Such reports may be made to the Deputy Head. Students may also raise concerns with their Housemaster or Housemistress, or with the Head of Safeguarding, who will ensure that the matter is passed appropriately to the Deputy Head.
- 14.4 The School takes all reports and complaints seriously. All allegations of discrimination or unequal treatment are investigated promptly, fairly and proportionately, in accordance with the relevant School policies and procedures. Where a breach of this policy is established, appropriate action will be taken which may include disciplinary measures.
- 14.5 All reported breaches of this policy, whether raised formally or informally, are recorded. Records are reviewed regularly to identify patterns, trends, or areas for improvement and to inform policy review, staff training, and preventive measures.

The School publishes information annually to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty. This information is made available on the School's website and is reviewed by senior leadership and Governors as part of the School's governance and oversight arrangements.

## 15.0 Related Policies and Statutory Guidance

- 15.1 This *Rugby School Equal Opportunities Policy (Students)* operates within a wider framework of School's policies and should be read in conjunction with the following, as relevant:
- Accessibility Plan
  - Admissions Policy
  - Complaints Procedure
  - Counter-Bullying Policy
  - Discipline and Rewards Policy
  - Guidelines for Life at Rugby School
  - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
  - SEND Policy
- 15.2 This policy has been informed by, and is consistent with, the following legislation and statutory guidance:
- Equality Act 2010
  - Children and Families Act 2014
  - Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

- Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) Framework for Inspection
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Technical Guidance for Schools in England (2023)
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

## **16.0 Policy Owner**

16.1 This policy is owned by the Deputy Head, who is responsible for its implementation, review and ongoing effectiveness. The Deputy Head reports to the Governing Body on the operation of this policy in accordance with the School’s governance arrangements.

<b>Reviewed at GB Education Committee:</b>	<b>Lent 2026</b>
<b>Ratified at GB Risk and Compliance Committee:</b>	<b>Lent 2026</b>