



FARNBOROUGH HILL
WHOLEHEARTEDLY

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Accessibility Plan
- Admissions Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy including Rewards and Sanctions
- Bursary and Hardship Awards Policy
- English as an Additional Language Policy
- Employment Handbook
- Exclusions Policy
- Gender Exploring Pupils' Policy
- Recruitment Selection and Disclosures Policy and Procedures
- SENDA Policy

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Farnborough Hill where all members of the School community can be expected to be treated with respect and dignity. Our mission is to educate the whole person, and to provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish. Farnborough Hill recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes all forms of discrimination.

Farnborough Hill is committed to being an equal opportunities school and is committed to the equal treatment of all its pupils and staff regardless of an individual's age, disability, gender/gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Together these are defined as *Protected Characteristics* in the Equality Act 2010.

Aims

The aims of this policy and the School's ethos as a whole is to:

- communicate the School's commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities for its pupils and staff;
- eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics;
- promote equal treatment for all members of the School community;
- maintain the centrality of the dignity of the human person to the life and teaching of the Catholic church;
- create and maintain an open and supportive environment, free from discrimination;
- foster mutual compassion, kindness and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the School;
- comply with the School's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010;
- remove or help to overcome barriers for pupils where they already exist;
- enforce that all discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

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

All parents are expected to support the aims of this policy and the School's Catholic ethos of compassion, kindness and respect.

Staff at the School, particularly those working at a leadership level, have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of the School with regard to equal opportunities.

Admissions

The School treats every application for admission in a fair, open-minded and equal way in accordance with this policy and the School's Admissions Policy. Although an academically selective School, each application will be considered on its merits in accordance with the School's selection criteria based on an applicant's ability and aptitude. The School accepts applications from, and admits, prospective pupils irrespective of their disability, gender, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief) or special educational needs ("SEN").

Please see the *Recruitment, Selection and Disclosures Policy and Procedures* in relation to our approach to staff recruitment and selection.

Parents must inform the School when submitting the Registration Form of any special circumstances relating to their child which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and/or ability to participate fully in the education provided by the School so that we can consider what reasonable adjustments may be necessary to ensure that the child is not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other children. A formal written diagnosis at consultant level should be provided to aid this process. The School will not offer a place to a child with disabilities if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the School cannot adequately cater for or meet their needs.

Bursaries are means-tested awards offered in order to make it possible for many more pupils, who meet the School's admission criteria but may otherwise be unable to attend the School due to financial hardship, to attend the School. Details of our provision for bursaries can be found on our website (*Financial Assistance (Bursary and Hardship Awards) Policy*) or obtained from the Bursar's Office.

The School also opposes all bullying and unlawful discrimination on the basis that a person has a special educational need 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, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme, and through the supportive school culture and through the School's policies.

As a GSA school, Farnborough Hill is committed to single-sex education for girls. GSA schools are able to operate a single-sex admissions policy without breaching the Equality Act 2010 on the basis of an exemption relating to biological sex. Admissions will be based on the prospective student's legal sex as recorded on their birth certificate, although applications from students who are legally female but who identify as trans or non-binary will be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUPILS

As a Catholic school, our *Admissions Policy* gives priority to Roman Catholic girls, when we are over-subscribed. Priority is also given to sisters. In all other respects, pupils at Farnborough Hill are treated fairly and equally from the point of registration to become members of the Farnborough Hill community.

Farnborough Hill is an academically selective school where the educational experience of pupils is enriched by girls being exposed to a wide range of cultural experiences whilst they are developing. Applications from candidates with a diverse range of race, religion or beliefs is, therefore, welcomed as this enriches our school community and forms a sound basis for preparing our pupils for life.

Reasonable adjustments for pupils with disability

The School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability to ensure they do not suffer a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other pupils, including during the admissions process.

Where the School is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, either on entry or during a pupil's time at the School, it will consult with parents about what reasonable adjustments, if any, the School is able to make to avoid their child being put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other pupils. The School will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a pupil's disability and the resources available to the School. Further information on the School's reasonable adjustments duty can be found in the School's SENDA Policy. A formal written diagnosis at consultant level should be provided to aid this process.

The School has an Accessibility Plan in place. Whilst we welcome applications from pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, families need to be aware that our Grade I listed buildings and steep site make some disabilities (e.g. wheelchair use) particularly challenging and access is currently not available to all areas of the School. We continue to work to address this through the *Accessibility Plan*.

General Equality/Sexual Orientation

Respecting the dignity of the person.

LGBTQ+ and Gender Exploring Pupils

The dignity of each person is central to creating a safe space for pupils to flourish, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. As a community, we are committed to protecting this, providing support and guidance as appropriate in consultation with parents, guardians and carers. As with any other forms of bullying, transphobic and homophobic behaviour will not be tolerated.

Educational Services

The School affords all pupils access to educational provision including all benefits, services and facilities, irrespective of any protected characteristic (subject to our reasonable adjustments duty and considerations of safety and welfare). The School will not discriminate against a pupil on the grounds of any protected characteristic by excluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

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 needs of all children and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics;
- ensure that pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with an Educational Health Care Plan receive necessary educational and welfare support;
- monitor the admission and progress of pupils from different backgrounds;
- challenge inappropriate and unacceptable discriminatory behaviour by pupils and staff;
- encourage children to work and play freely and have respect for all other pupils irrespective of any protected characteristic;
- offer all pupils access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of co-curricular activities
- work with parents and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in school;
- ensure that it reviews, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices;

- use Assemblies, Form Time, PSHEE, Religious Education, Drama, English, History and other academic lessons to:
 - promote compassion, kindness and respect for each other, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010;
 - promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues
 - encourage children to question and challenge assumptions and stereotypes in order to better understand discriminatory behaviours and bias.

The School recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability whether or not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms (including cyber bullying) are unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.

Religious belief

Although the School's religious ethos is based on Catholic values and tradition, the School is inclusive and welcomes and respects the rights and freedoms of individuals from other religions and faiths (or with no religion or faith) subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the rights and freedoms of other members of the School community.

The Governing Body, through the Senior Leadership Team, actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and compassion and kindness of those with different faiths and beliefs.

To be successful, this *Equal Opportunities Policy* requires strong and positive support from parents, and full acceptance of the School's Catholic ethos of compassion, kindness and respect.

English as an Additional Language

Pupils with English as an Additional Language (**EAL**) will receive additional learning support if necessary; fees for which are additional to the main school fees. The School will consult with the pupil and the parents as appropriate. (See *English as an Additional Language Policy*.)

Mass, Assembly, Form Prayers, Retreats and Religious Education Lessons

All pupils attend Mass, assembly, form prayers, retreats and Religious Education lessons. The Catholic foundation of the School unites all members of the School community. The School aims not to exclude pupils and nor does the School expect any pupil to be excluded by herself or by a parent. Pupils are helped to develop an understanding of their own faith and others within the diverse setting of the School.

Feast days, fasting and times for prayers are respected and pupils are helped to integrate particular faith needs within the context of their school routines. Faith backgrounds and cultural backgrounds are recognised as important aspects of pupil identity and acknowledged and honoured accordingly. 'The Haven', a multi-faith prayer space, makes specific provision for diverse prayer requirements.

Requests for Variations in the School Uniform

Parents should be aware that all pupils at Farnborough Hill are required to wear the designated school uniform until the end of Year 11. The Headmistress will consider written requests from parents and pupils for variations in the uniform for reasons related to disability, gender reassignment and/or on religious grounds that are consistent with the School's ethos and its policy on health and safety and that such requests are reasonable in all the circumstances including in light of the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The School's *Gender Exploring Pupils Policy* is available on the School website. The Headmistress will normally arrange to meet with the parents to discuss the implications of such a request.

Breaches of this policy

Pupils who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy.

If you believe that a child has received less favourable treatment as a result of a protected characteristic, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to a child's detriment you are encouraged to follow the procedure as described in the School's *Complaints Policy and Procedure*, which can be found on the School website

Monitoring

Farnborough Hill monitors the effectiveness of this *Equal Opportunities Policy* regularly and Governors are kept up-to-date as is deemed relevant. As part of that process, all parents who accept places at the School for their child are asked to complete an Ethnic Background form. Such statistics are submitted, anonymously, to the DfE (Department for Education) as part of the Annual School Census. We hope that all parents will feel able to participate in this gathering of information.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF

The School, in its employment practices, will avoid any unlawful discrimination against its employees, in particular, in relation to their actual or perceived holistically characteristics or the fact that they are part-time or full-time employees. Employees and applicants for employment will not be disadvantaged by any policies or conditions of service which cannot be justified for operational purposes or because of the School's adherence to the Catholic faith. The School will, at all times, strive to work within legislative requirements as well as promoting best practice.

The School will seek to identify and act upon any unfair or unlawful discrimination which denies an individual an opportunity on any of the criteria mentioned above. Existing staff and job applicants have the right to complain about unlawful discrimination through the appropriate procedures which are set out in the *Complaints Procedure for Staff* and the *Grievance Procedure* available in the *Employment Handbook*.

All members of staff are asked:

- to co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity
- to report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices to their line-manager
- not to persuade or attempt to persuade others to practise unlawful discrimination
- not to victimise anyone as a result of them having reported or provided evidence of discrimination
- not to harass, abuse or intimidate others on account of their race, gender, or any of the protected characteristics
- not to lobby job applicants in an attempt to discourage them from applying or taking up a post

Disability

- A person will be described as having a disability when he/she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- A disability will not of itself justify the non-recruitment of an applicant for a post at the School. The School will consider making reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged because of a disability. For example, where written tests are used, reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that the information is presented in an accessible format for visually impaired applicants.
- Before an applicant is judged, because of a reason related to a disability, to have failed to meet the requirements of a job description and person specification, or to have been less suitable than other applicants, full consideration will be given to whether a reasonable adjustment can be made which will counteract any disadvantage.
- The School will consider making such reasonable adjustments to working arrangements or school premises to enable a disabled staff member to carry out his/her duties. This will include, but is not limited to, consideration of the provision of specialist equipment, job redesign, retraining and flexible hours.
- The School recognises the importance of taking pro-active measures to remove barriers to disabled people from the working environment. This will benefit not only disabled members of staff but also any visitors with disabilities.
- Where before, or during, the course of employment with the School an employee knows or believes that he/she might be disabled, he/she should discuss this with the Bursar in the first instance so that the School can consider reasonable adjustments to aid the employee in his/her employment. If an employee is disabled and recognises a need for a reasonable adjustment to be made to his/her

working arrangements or the School premises, he/she should discuss this with the School. The employee's own expertise concerning his/her disability will be recognised.

- Where the School does not have the relevant expertise to resolve a problem, an outside specialist may be consulted and the employee may be required to give his/her consent to a report being produced about his/her state of health and ability to perform his/her duties.
- Once an adjustment has been made, its operation may need to be reviewed at agreed intervals, to assess its continuing effectiveness.

Dignity at Work

- No employee should engage in any behaviour or conduct which might amount to harassment of another person at work. Harassment of any kind is regarded as a disciplinary offence and in serious instances may lead to instant dismissal.
- Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct, aimed at a particular person or at a person who is associated with the person making the complaint, which is of a sexual nature, or other conduct, based on someone's actual or perceived disability, age, race, religion and/or gender, sexual orientation or because of a person's gender re-assignment, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment at work. It may also take the form of unwanted conduct towards someone based on his/her disability, appearance or other personal characteristics which is perceived as affecting his/her dignity at work. Harassment includes not only unwanted physical contact, assault or propositions; it also includes suggestive remarks or gestures, pin-ups, graffiti, offensive comments, jokes and banter. Harassment may include bullying, intimidatory behaviour, persistent teasing or constant unfounded criticism of the performance of work tasks, unfair allocation of work and responsibilities, or exclusion from normal workplace conversation. It may be directed towards one individual or a group. A single incident can amount to harassment, if sufficiently grave. In addition, behaviour might still amount to harassment even if it is not directed at a specific individual.
- If an employee considers that they have been the recipient of unwanted conduct amounting to harassment, either by another member of staff or by a third party associated with the School, the employee should try to resolve the problem informally with the other person, either face to face or in writing, if possible. If this is not appropriate or has been tried unsuccessfully, the employee should raise a grievance in accordance with the *Grievance Procedure*. All such grievances will be dealt with sensitively and in confidence. Breach of that confidence, by either party or the person dealing with the grievance, will be dealt with as a disciplinary offence. Both during the investigation of the complaint and afterwards, whatever the outcome, consideration will be given to ensuring that the employee and the alleged harasser are not required to work together against the employee's wishes.
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team, or Head of Department, will assist the employee, at any stage of the harassment procedure, either by acting as an intermediary, devising a means of putting an end to the harassment, or assisting the employee in presenting a complaint.
- A false or malicious allegation will be treated as a disciplinary offence. Retaliation against a member of staff who complains of harassment can be expected to lead to disciplinary action.

Complaints/Alleged Breaches

Any member of staff wishing to raise a complaint should do so in line with the *Grievance Procedure*, available in the *Staff Handbook*.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Assistant Head – Operations/Pastoral, Headmistress and Bursar.

The next review is due in February 2026.