

GARSTANG ST THOMAS CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY: SINGLE EQUALITY POLICY

1. Introduction

Garstang St Thomas Church of England Primary School is committed to promoting equality, inclusion and respect throughout school life. We aim to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Equality does not always mean treating everyone in exactly the same way. We recognise that individuals and groups may face different barriers and may require different support, reasonable adjustments or proportionate action so that they can participate fully and achieve positive outcomes.

2. School ethos and aims

This policy reflects the Christian mission, values and ethos of the school. Equality is a responsibility shared by governors, staff, pupils and the wider school community. We want every member of our community to feel safe, respected, valued and able to participate fully in school life.

- provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment in which discrimination, prejudice, harassment and victimisation are challenged;
- promote high expectations and equality of opportunity for all pupils;
- identify and remove barriers to learning, participation and belonging;
- celebrate diversity while promoting shared values, respect and positive relationships;
- ensure that policies, practices and significant decisions take appropriate account of equality considerations;
- work constructively with parents, carers and the wider community; and
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, staff and visitors where required by law.

3. Legal framework

This policy is principally informed by the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. The school will also have regard, where relevant, to the Children and Families Act 2014, statutory safeguarding guidance and other applicable education, employment and accessibility duties.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

The application of particular protected characteristics differs according to the function being exercised. For example, age is not a protected characteristic in relation to the treatment of pupils by schools, but it is relevant to employment. Marriage and civil partnership is relevant to the school's employment duties and to the first limb of the PSED.

4. Public Sector Equality Duty

In exercising its functions, the school will have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Having "due regard" means giving relevant and proportionate consideration to equality when decisions are made. Equality considerations should be taken into account before and at the time a policy, practice or significant decision is developed, and kept under review. Where appropriate, decision-makers will consider available evidence about the likely impact on people with protected characteristics and any reasonable or proportionate steps that could reduce disadvantage, meet different needs or encourage participation.

The school remains responsible for meeting the PSED when functions or services are delivered on its behalf by external providers.

5. Specific equality duties and publication

The school will publish information demonstrating how it complies with the PSED and will update this information at least annually. The school will also prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives at least every four years. Equality information and objectives will be made available on the school website in accordance with the requirements for maintained schools.

6. Equality in practice

The school will embed equality considerations across its work, including curriculum provision, teaching and learning, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, admissions, educational visits, extra-curricular activities, uniform, facilities, recruitment and employment. We will seek to ensure that rules and practices do not create unjustified barriers for people with protected characteristics.

We will respond appropriately to discriminatory incidents and bullying, including racism, disability-related bullying, sexism, sexual harassment, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying, and prejudice relating to religion or belief. Incidents will be dealt with under the school's behaviour, anti-bullying and safeguarding procedures as appropriate, and records will be maintained and reviewed to identify patterns or necessary action.

7. Disability and reasonable adjustments

The school will not discriminate against disabled pupils and will take reasonable steps to avoid substantial disadvantage arising from a provision, criterion or practice or from the absence of an auxiliary aid or service. Reasonable adjustments will be considered on an individual basis and in anticipation of the needs of disabled pupils where appropriate.

The school will maintain and review its accessibility planning arrangements in accordance with its statutory duties. Equality considerations will be taken into account when planning the curriculum, educational visits, school events, access to facilities and other benefits and services.

8. Sex and gender reassignment

The school recognises sex and gender reassignment as separate protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. For the purposes of the Equality Act, references to sex are interpreted in accordance with current law. The school will continue to protect pupils and staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to either sex or gender reassignment.

Where a child is questioning their gender, the school will respond sensitively and on an individual basis, with safeguarding and the child's welfare at the centre of decision-making, and will follow current statutory safeguarding guidance. Decisions about matters such as facilities, sport, privacy and any request for social transition will be made in accordance with current law, safeguarding duties and applicable Department for Education guidance.

9. Curriculum and teaching

The curriculum will promote respect, inclusion and understanding and will challenge prejudice and stereotypes. Teaching about protected characteristics will be age-appropriate, factual and consistent with statutory curriculum requirements and the school's Christian ethos. Pupils will be supported to discuss differences respectfully and to understand that people may hold different lawful views and beliefs.

10. Admissions and access to school activities

Admissions arrangements will be operated fairly, transparently and in accordance with the School Admissions Code, the Equality Act 2010 and the school's status as a Church of England voluntary aided school. Equality considerations will also inform access to school activities, clubs, trips, benefits, facilities and services. Where an exception in equality law applies, the school will apply it carefully and only to the extent permitted by law.

11. Employment and staffing

As an employer, the school is committed to fair recruitment, employment and development practices and to a working environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Recruitment and employment decisions will be based on relevant criteria and legal requirements. The school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and applicants where required.

Any lawful occupational requirements or religion or belief provisions relevant to particular posts in a voluntary aided Church of England school will be applied only where legally justified and appropriate.

12. Data, monitoring and equality information

The school will use appropriate and proportionate information to understand whether different groups experience different outcomes or barriers. This may include, where relevant and lawful, information relating to attainment and progress, attendance, suspensions and permanent exclusions, behaviour and bullying, participation, complaints, safeguarding themes, SEND and accessibility, and engagement with families.

Information will be handled in accordance with data protection law. Small-number data will not normally be published where doing so could identify individuals. Findings from monitoring will inform school improvement, equality objectives and proportionate action where needed.

13. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body will:

- ensure that the school meets its statutory equality duties;
- approve and review this policy and the school's equality objectives;

- ensure that equality considerations are appropriately reflected in strategic decision-making; and
- monitor progress against published equality objectives.

The Headteacher will:

- provide leadership for the implementation of this policy;
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities and receive appropriate information or training;
- ensure discriminatory incidents are addressed appropriately;
- ensure equality considerations are incorporated into relevant policies and significant decisions; and
- report to governors on equality matters and progress against objectives.

All staff will promote an inclusive ethos, model respectful behaviour, challenge discriminatory language and conduct, make or support reasonable adjustments where appropriate, and report concerns in accordance with school procedures. Pupils, parents, carers, governors, volunteers, contractors and visitors are expected to support the school's commitment to equality and respectful conduct.

14. Complaints and concerns

Concerns about discrimination, harassment, victimisation or the application of this policy should be raised with the school so that they can be addressed promptly. Complaints will be considered under the school's published complaints procedure where appropriate. Safeguarding concerns will be managed under the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

15. Monitoring, review and publication

This policy will normally be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier where there is a significant change in legislation, statutory guidance or school circumstances. Equality information will be updated at least annually and equality objectives will be reviewed and republished at least every four years. Progress against equality objectives will be monitored by school leaders and governors.

Appendix 1 – Key legal and guidance references

- Equality Act 2010;
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty for schools and technical guidance for schools in England;
- Children and Families Act 2014, including duties relevant to pupils with SEND and disability;
- School Admissions Code and relevant admissions legislation;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (from 1 September 2026);
- Department for Education guidance on what maintained schools must publish online; and
- other current statutory guidance relevant to equality, safeguarding, behaviour, curriculum, accessibility and employment.

Note: The school will have regard to updated EHRC guidance when finalised following the EHRC's 2026 consultation on revised technical guidance for schools in England.