Equality and Diversity Policy

Date Policy due to be reviewed: September 2027

Committee Responsible for Policy: Personnel Committee

WORK HARD | BE KIND | AIM HIGH

Section 1 - Purpose

Hillcrest School is committed to promoting the fundamental British Values and valuing diversity by providing equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children and families. Hillcrest School recognises that diversity is a reality of our community that brings significant educational benefits to all students, enabling the creation of learning experiences enriched by different life experiences, varied perspectives, flexibility and creativity.

Hillcrest School seeks to ensure that no member of the school community, or any person through their contact with the school, will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of a **protected characteristic**. These include:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment and gender identity
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or civil partnership

Hillcrest School will apply 'due regard' when deciding or taking an action and assess whether it may have implications for people with protected characteristics. We will consider equality implications before we make decisions or update policies and procedures.

In this we include all members of the extended school community: pupils, staff, Governors, parents and others from our local community. Partners, contractors and other visitors to the school are also expected to adhere to this policy.

Hillcrest School recognises that the richness and diversity of culture and experience that we now enjoy is our heritage. It is the school's policy to accept and celebrate diversity; any form of intolerance is counterproductive and unacceptable. The school is therefore committed to building and environment where:

1. All students, staff, parents and stakeholders are treated with dignity and respect
2. Diversity is valued
3. Stereotypes are questioned
4. Bias, bigotry, prejudice, racism and homophobia are wholeheartedly rejected
5. All forms of, including unlawful, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying is eliminated

Everyone at school will take responsibility for challenging stereotypes and all forms of discrimination. The school will promote equal of opportunity and will investigate all complaints of discrimination.

The Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team accept and welcome their responsibility to have due regard in decision-making of the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics. We will consider equality implications before and at the time we develop policy and make decisions.

Section 2 - Legal framework to which this policy relates

- Children Act 2004
- Duty to Promote Community Cohesion, Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010 (replaced all existing equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act)
- DFE guidance: The Equality Act and Schools
- Equality & Human Rights Commission guidance: Public Sector Equality Duty Guidance (2014)
- Sex Matters: Boys and Girls and the Equality Act (May 2021)
- DFE: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

Legal Scope (Equality Act, 2010)

The Act defines four kinds of unlawful behaviour – direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; harassment and victimisation.

Direct discrimination
Direct discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably, because of a protected characteristic, than they treat - or would treat - other people. For example, at Hillcrest School we would never refuse to let a pupil be a college prefect because she is a lesbian.

Indirect discrimination
Indirect discrimination occurs when a "provision, criterion or practice" is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic. An example might be holding a parents' meeting on a Friday evening, which could make it difficult for observant Jewish parents to attend. At Hillcrest School we would endeavour to rearrange such events to ensure all parents could attend.

Harassment
Harassment has a specific legal definition in the Act - it is "unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person". This covers unpleasant and bullying behaviour, but potentially extends also to actions which, whether intentionally or unintentionally, cause offence to a person because of a protected characteristic. Thus, if a teacher belittles a pupil and holds her up to ridicule in class because of a disability she has, this could lead to a court case alleging unlawful harassment. The same unacceptable treatment directed at a lesbian pupil, or based on a pupil's religion, could lead to a case claiming direct discrimination.

Victimisation
Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done ("a protected act") in connection with the Act. A protected act might involve, for example, making an allegation of discrimination or bringing a case under the Act, or supporting another person's complaint by giving evidence or information, but it includes anything that is done under or in connection with the Act.

Hillcrest School recognises it is unlawful to victimise a pupil for anything done in relation to the Equality Act (2010) by their parent or sibling. As well as it being unlawful to victimise a person who does a protected act, we will not victimise a pupil because of something done by their parent or a sibling in relation to the Act. This means that a child will not be made to suffer in any way because, for example, her mother has made a complaint of sex discrimination against the school, or her brother has claimed that a teacher is bullying him because he is gay, whether the mother or brother was acting in good faith.

Hillcrest School recognises it is unlawful to discriminate because of the sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity (including questioning or non-conformity) of another person with whom a pupil is associated. So, for example, we will not discriminate by refusing to admit a pupil because his parents are gay men, lesbians, non-binary or transgender.

Hillcrest School also recognises it is unlawful to discriminate because of a characteristic which we think a person has, even if we are mistaken. For example, we recognise a teacher who consistently picks on a pupil for being gay will be discriminating because of sexual orientation whether the pupil is in fact gay.

Hillcrest School recognises and seeks to cultivate an awareness of the potential impact of 'unconscious bias amongst all stakeholders. Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness, which can have a significant impact on attitudes and behaviour towards groups of people and individuals in these groups. We recognise that everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from a tendency to organise social worlds by categorising. Unconscious biases are different to conscious, or explicit, biases, which are

intentionally discriminative. We aim to provide all stakeholders with an awareness of the impact of unconscious bias to prevent any incidents.

Section 3 - Guiding Principles
In fulfilling our legal duties listed above, we are guided by three essential principles:

- Every pupil should have opportunities to achieve the highest possible standards, and the best possible qualifications for the next stages of their life and education.
- Every pupil should be helped to develop a sense of personal and cultural identity that is confident and open to change, and that is receptive and respectful towards other identities.
- Every pupil should develop the knowledge, understandings and skills that they need in order to participate in Britain's multi-ethnic society, and in the wider context of an interdependent world.

Scope
We ensure that the principles listed above apply to the full range of our policies and practices, including those that are concerned with:

- safeguarding and access to appropriate internal and external support;
- pupils' progress, attainment and assessment;
- behaviour, discipline and exclusions, including countering-bullying and behaviour online;
- pupils' personal development, pastoral care and emotional/physical well-being;
- teaching and learning (including technology and resources to learn remotely);
- internal assessments and public examinations (having regard to the latest JCQ guidance for centres on planning for equality and diversity related issues in external assessment);
- admissions and attendance;
- the content of the curriculum;
- extra-curricular provision;
- educational visits;
- staff recruitment and professional development; and
- partnerships with parents and communities.

We will always look at making ‘reasonable adjustments’ in each area above for students with disabilities, including mental health conditions and gender dysphoria.

Aims of the Policy is to

- provide a secure environment in which all our children can flourish, and the uniqueness of individuals is recognised and celebrated;
- provide a learning environment where all individuals see themselves reflected, feel a sense of belonging and gain a positive self-image and high self-esteem;
- prepare children for life in a diverse society in which children are able to see their place in the local, regional, national and international community;
- create an environment in which all stakeholders actively challenge stereotypes, prejudiced attitudes and unfair discriminatory behaviour;
- challenge all stereotypes about the appearance, behaviour or interests expected of girls and boys, or women and men;
- include and value the contribution of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity;
- provide positive information about different groups of people regardless of protected characteristics under the law (disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender identity, gender reassignment, gender non-conformity, and pregnancy/maternity);
- plan systematically to improve our understanding and promotion of diversity, including pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- foster good relations across all protected characteristics between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;

- identify and remove or minimise the barriers which could lead to unequal outcomes for identified groups of pupils;
- encourage all students, particularly those with a protected characteristic, to participate fully in all aspects of school life; and
- make inclusion a thread which runs through all our activities.

How these aims will be implemented:

- involve stakeholders, particularly those from protected characteristic backgrounds, in the development, review, evaluation, and impact assessment of all relevant improvement plans, policies and procedures;
- publish and share our policies with the whole school community;
- collect and analyse data to ensure all groups are progressing well and no group is subject to disadvantage;
- analyse this data to determine strengths and areas for improvement, plan interventions in response to the obstacles to pupil progress and target available resources and funding to promote the progress of different groups of pupils;
- use all available information to set suitable learning challenges for all, respond to pupils' diverse needs and overcome any potential barriers to learning;
- ensure that the wider school curriculum makes explicit and implicit provision to promote and celebrate diversity;
- have high expectations of behaviour, including online, which demonstrates respect to others;
- ensure that all 'reasonable adjustments' are made to ensure equality of opportunity;
- monitor and report all bullying, racist and homophobic (trans, gender questioning and bi-phobic) incidents and identify trends and patterns to inform future interventions and strategies to eliminate such behaviour.

Section 4 - Responsibilities

The Equality and Diversity policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved and connected to Hillcrest School. Promoting equality and raising the achievement of all pupils is the responsibility of everyone.

The Governing Body

It is the responsibility of the Governing body to:

- ensure that the school complies with equality legislation;
- ensure the equality information is updated annually and that equality objectives are published and communicated through the school;
- ensure that the school's policy and its procedures and strategies are carried out and monitored with appropriate impact assessments informing future plans;
- ensure the school's admissions policy is fair and equitable in its treatment of all groups;
- ensure the school has equitable staff recruitment procedures
- ensure the school follows equitable procedures in the professional development of all staff;
- deal with serious breaches of the policy.

The Headteacher

It is the Headteacher's responsibility to:

- implement the policy and its strategies and procedures;
- ensure that all staff, including volunteers and trainee teachers, receive appropriate and relevant continuous professional development to ensure they fully understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy;
- ensure appropriate funding and resources are allocated and used appropriately to support pupils not making expected progress;
- anticipating and enabling reasonable adjustments to be made in relation to any of the protected characteristics in regard to pupils, staff, parents/carers and visitors to the school;

- actively challenge and take appropriate action in any cases of discriminatory practice and record actions;
- deal with any reported incidents of harassment or bullying in line with school guidance and record actions;
- ensure that all visitors (including supply teachers, volunteers and trainee teachers) and contractors are aware of, and comply with, the school's equality and diversity policy;
- assess and monitor the impact of this policy and report outcomes to the Governing Body.

Senior Leadership Team
The Leadership Team will be responsible for reviewing and monitoring curriculum policies and ensuring that equality is promoted in all aspects of our provision.

All Staff (including volunteers, supply teachers and trainee teachers)
It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- be vigilant in all areas of the school, look out for any type of harassment and bullying, including online, and challenge and/or report any discrimination or disrespectful behaviour to the relevant Head of Year;
- deal effectively with all incidents from overt name-calling, including online, to the more subtle forms of victimisation caused by perceived differences;
- identify and challenge bias and stereotypes within the curriculum and in the school's culture;
- promote equality, and good relations and not discriminate on the grounds of any protected characteristics;
- promote an inclusive curriculum and whole school ethos which reflects our diverse society;
- ensure marking of pupil's work is fair and accurate through minimising unconscious bias - for example, in relation to ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical/mental disability, gender identity.
- keep up to date with equality legislation, development and issues by attending relevant training and accessing information from appropriate sources;

Parents/Carers
It is the responsibility of parents/carers to:

- support our school in its implementation of this policy, particularly in relation to their child's conduct online;
- follow the school policy through their own behaviour;
- ensure their children attend and engage in the learning;
- participate in parental surveys and join our 'Parent Forum' to provide feedback on current provision and policies moving forward;
- report to staff about any prejudice related incidents that occur.

Section 5 - Inclusion
The school is committed to inclusion and believes that all children should have the opportunity to succeed in life (EMC)**.**

The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) is responsible for inclusion, well-being and co-ordinating the transition process. A coordinated approach to transition has been developed and refined, to ensure that children with special or additional needs are identified prior to transition and that the school is aware of any special provision, or reasonable adjustments, which an individual might require.

Parents who may be considering applying for their child to attend the school are also welcome to contact the school themselves to discuss any issues or concerns, the open evening and induction evening both provide further opportunities for parents to inform the school about any needs their child might have. Where pupils join the school at other times of the year, initial interviews with the parents or careers enable them to notify the school about any special needs. Further opportunities for communication are provided through the school planner system and by Parents' Evenings, so that any issues that develop during a pupil's school career can also be dealt with.

- The school has a well-established pastoral system through which pupils can raise any concerns.

- The school engages a wide range of external agencies to allow us to raise and gain appropriate support with any concerns they may have.

- The school has regular school council and year council meetings at which issues of concern to pupils can be raised.

- Pupils and parental surveys are carried out through which satisfaction with the educational experience can be monitored.

Section 6 - Curriculum

The way in which a school provides education - the delivery of the curriculum - is explicitly included in the Equality Act (2010). Teaching and Learning strategies ensure that the way in which issues are taught do not subject individual pupils to discrimination. We have an inclusive curriculum that is accessible to all pupils.

Guidance from the DFE states; 'Pupils should leave school with a proper understanding of the importance of equality and understanding differences. This includes differences in religion, belief and sexual orientation'.

Staff recognise that valid complaints that the curriculum being delivered in a discriminatory way might well arise in situations such as the following:

- A teacher uses the fact that 'The Taming of the Shrew' is a set book to make derogatory generalisations about the inferiority of women, in a way which makes the girls in the class feel belittled. Or, in teaching 'The Merchant of Venice', he encourages the class to laugh at a Jewish pupil.

- In class discussions, black pupils are never called on and the teacher makes it clear that she is not interested in their views.

- Girls are discouraged from opting for GCSE design technology courses.

At Hillcrest School weekly assemblies and daily form periods provide opportunities facts of worship or other forms of collective religious observance. Through assemblies and our wider curriculum, we celebrate a wide range of religious festivals throughout the year. Our Character Education curriculum ensures everyone is aware of our expectations and how inappropriate behaviour, including online, can affect the attitude, achievement and status of all those around us. This is a fundamental principle of our relationships and sex education curriculum in school.

We aim to provide all our pupils with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement. To do this, our Character Education curriculum and wider learning will endeavour to:

- Ensure equality of access to the whole school experience for all pupils and prepare them for life in a diverse society;
- Use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, without stereotyping;
- Promote attitudes, values and skills that challenge prejudice-based and discriminatory behaviour, sexual harassment and violence, and forms of cyber-bullying;
- Provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture, religion and beliefs and celebrate the diversity of other cultures;
- Use a range of sensitive teaching strategies when teaching about different cultural and religious traditions;
- Develop pupils' advocacy skills so that they can detect bias, and challenge discrimination, leading to justice and equality;
- Ensure that the curriculum covers issues of equality, diversity, religion, human rights, sexuality, gender reassignment, sexual identity (including non-conformity), and inclusion;

- Prepare pupils for living in a multicultural society and promote good relations between different racial groups;
- Celebrate diversity and promote (where appropriate) the positive contribution of different ethnic minority groups to the curriculum area, as well as profiling the positive contributions made to society by other minority groups;
- Celebrate the progress made and achievements of the LGBTQ+ community and signpost support in school and externally;
- Celebrate what we have in common yet promoting our individual uniqueness;
- Seek to involve all parents/carers in supporting their child's education;
- Provide educational visits and extra-curricular activities that involve all pupil groupings;
- Take account of the composition of individual teaching groups;
- Take account of the different learning needs of different groups of pupils, using an appropriate range of teaching strategies to enable all pupils to progress;
- Utilise seating plans to foster effective learning;
- Take account of the current performance of all pupils when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets;
- Make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of pupils, including signposting and access to online support.

At Hillcrest we find unacceptable any attitude or behaviour which may result in anyone feeling disrespected, undervalued and unsupported. Such behaviours may include:

- Insults, name-calling, mocking, gossiping and spreading hurtful or untrue rumours, jokes (banter) or comments, including online, relating to those with different protected characteristics; and
- Sharing images which may offend or foster negative perceptions of those with different protected characteristics.

Thread	Relationships	Health	Community
Year 7	Build friendships; recognise respect, power and boundaries; understand family change and introductory consent.	Name and manage emotions; understand puberty, menstruation, healthy habits, tobacco and vaping.	Belong, respect difference and contribute safely; develop basic financial decision-making and digital/media literacy.
Year 8	Prevent bullying; apply consent and legal protections; recognise harmful sexual behaviour and harmful practices.	Make healthier choices; manage sleep, activity, minor ailments, alcohol risk and body image.	Apply equality and anti-discrimination principles; participate safely online and offline; manage money and recognise scams.

Year 9	Navigate romantic and intimate relationships; apply consent law; recognise exploitation and harassment; use contraception and STI services.	Understand mental-health needs, drugs, sleep and first aid; make informed sexual and reproductive-health decisions.	Understand legal equality and diverse relationships; make careers choices; challenge online harms, gambling and weapon-related risk.
Year 10	Analyse coercion, abuse, capacity and influence; challenge victim-blaming; support others and report safely.	Take responsibility for health; understand conditions, screening, immunisation, risk and the interaction between substances and sexual choices.	Analyse prejudice, extremism, algorithms and online influence; understand workplace rights and prepare for post-16 pathways.
Year 11	Manage adult relationships independently; communicate consent and contraception; access sexual-health and relationship support; understand parenting and pregnancy choices.	Use health services independently; manage stress and mental health; understand dependency, fertility, pregnancy, sexual health and personal safety.	
End-point intent	Form and maintain equal, safe and ethical relationships; recognise harm and obtain appropriate support.	Make informed, sustainable health decisions and confidently navigate support and healthcare systems.	To be able to confidently transition into post-16 and adult life. To be able to make informed decisions and contribute positively to the community.

As outlined in our Anti-Bullying and Behaviour policies, we will take appropriate action against individuals that display behaviour that is incompatible with this policy. This may result in fixed term suspension or permanent exclusion from school, depending on the nature, severity and frequency of incidents.

Learning Environment
There is a consistently high expectation of all pupils regardless of age, gender, race, disability, ability, social background, sexual orientation and gender identity. Every child should be free to express their identity and express an alternative gender identity or proposing to transition without changing their sex.

To secure the best possible outcomes for all our young people, we recognise the importance of:

- Teacher commitment, expertise and enthusiasm as a vital factor in achieving a high level of motivation and good results from all pupils;
- Adults in the school providing good, positive role models in their approach to all issues relating to equality and diversity;
- The school placing a high priority on the provision for those with special educational needs and disabilities. We strive to meet all pupils' learning needs, including the more-able;
- The school making 'reasonable adjustments' and providing an environment in which all pupils have equal access to all facilities and resources, including when learning remotely from home;

- Creating an environment where all pupils are encouraged to be actively involved in their own learning;
- Encouraging pupils and parents to create an appropriate learning environment at home and providing them with advice about how to do this;
- Providing opportunities for completing Extended Learning beyond the school day on the school site;
- Using a range of teaching methods throughout the school to ensure that effective learning takes place at all stages for all pupils.

The provision of good quality resources and materials within Hillcrest is a high priority. These resources will:

- Reflect the reality of an ethnically, culturally and sexually diverse society;
- Reflect a variety of viewpoints;
- Show positive images of different ethnic groups, males and females in society, and people with disabilities;
- Reflect non-stereotypical images of all groups in a global context;
- Include materials to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues;
- Reflect the equity of different types of relationships, marital status and family units;
- Be equally accessible to all members of school community, consistent with health and safety
- Not promote, explicitly or implicitly, racist, anti-disability, sexist, homophobic or ageist views.

We recognise that it is important that all members of the school community use appropriate language, including online, which:

- Does not transmit or confirm stereotypes;
- Does not intentionally offend;
- Creates and enhances positive images of particular groups identified at the beginning of this document;
- Creates the conditions for all people to develop their self-esteem;
- Recognises the individuality and background of all members of the school community, with everyone endeavouring to spell and pronounce names correctly;
- Uses appropriate terminology in referring to particular groups or individuals.

We make appropriate provision for all EAL/bilingual children/groups in Years 7-13 to ensure access to an appropriate curriculum. These groups may include:

- Traveller and Gypsy Roma children;
- Those from refugee families;
- Asylum seekers;
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language;
- Pupils who are new to the United Kingdom.

Student voice plays a key role in updating our practice and policies. Students from different groups are consulted and involved in decision-making through our College Prefect system and Student Parliament. We endeavour to ensure both reflect a full cross-section of our school community.

Section 7 - Staffing and Staff Development

We recognise the need for positive role models and distribution of responsibility among staff. This will include pupil access to a balance of male and female staff at different key stages. We undertake to encourage the career development and aspirations of all individuals. It is our policy to provide staff with training and development, which will increase awareness of the needs of different groups of pupils in the various dimensions of equality of opportunity.

Staff Recruitment and Professional Development

- All posts are advertised formally.
- All those involved in recruitment and selection are trained and aware of what they should do to avoid discrimination and ensure good practice which takes account of equalities through the recruitment and selection process.
- The school encourages applicants from all sections of the community.
- Access to opportunities for professional development is monitored on equality grounds.

- Equalities policies and practices are covered in all staff inductions.
- All supply staff are made aware of equalities policies and practices.
- Employment policy and procedures are reviewed regularly to check conformity with legislation and impact.
- As part of the staff recruitment process all applicants are asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Summary information will be reviewed by the Governors Personnel committee.

Section 8 - Racial Discrimination
The definition of race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

Hillcrest School fully acknowledges its moral duty (as related to the United Kingdom's Race Relations Act, 1976, Section 1) to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between members of different racial groups and it positively welcomes any communal or educational opportunities afforded by the school's cultural and religious diversity. We ensure pupils of all races are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

All members of the school (whether of the pupil body, teaching or support staff) deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and with a sensitive understanding of their religious, cultural and racial differences and of the consequences thereof. We are very proactive in tackling racial discrimination, and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations, and will not discriminate against anyone based on race, colour, nationality or citizenship, or ethnic or national origin. The school will not tolerate any form of racial discrimination, racial harassment or inciting of racial hatred, including online and in the community, which may have a detrimental impact on the day-to-day running of the school and the experiences of stakeholders in school. Racially abusive language by pupils or staff will not be tolerated. Incidents of this nature may be offences under criminal law and will be treated as such. The school will respond in line with sanctions outlined in the Anti-bullying and Behaviour policies.

Section 9 - Religion or Belief
The Equality Act defines "religion" as being any religion, and "belief" as any religious or philosophical belief. A lack of religion or a lack of belief are also protected characteristics. Religion will include for example all the major faith groups and belief will include non-religious worldviews such as humanism. Religion will also include denominations or sects within a religion, such as Catholicism or Protestantism within Christianity. It is not however intended to include political beliefs such as Communism or support for any political party. Lack of religion or belief is also included in the definition of "religion or belief". This means it is unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds that they do not adhere, or sufficiently adhere, to a particular religion or belief (even one shared by the discriminator), or indeed any religion or belief at all – such as, for example, an atheist.

At Hillcrest School all religious beliefs are valued and respected. We recognise, for example, a teacher should not discriminate against a pupil because of his own personal religious views about homosexuality or the role of women. We recognise, respect and celebrate the various traditions, customs and rules of different religious groups and will not discriminate against any pupil on the grounds of his or her religion or belief.

The school understands that for religious reasons certain pupils might wish to behave in ways that are contrary to accepted school rules. Every effort will be made to meet the sincere wishes of these pupils. The school undertakes to tailor collective worship and religious teaching to reflect the particular racial and religious mix in the school.

Section 10 - Sex and Gender
All applicants for admission to the school, and all pupils of the school, will be treated the same way, irrespective of sex. In particular, the school will ensure that:

- No attempt is made to balance the number of boys and girls admitted to the school (Sixth Form Consortium)
- All children have equal access to the National Curriculum
- Careers advice, interviews and literature are not sex discriminatory.

- All pupils, regardless of their sex will have equal access to work experience placements, all forms of community and social service, all recreational, sport and social facilities and all out of school activities.

Section 11 - LGBTQ+

Hillcrest School will not discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone because of her/his actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identify. The school will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone because of her/his actual or perceived sexual orientation. The school will promote equality of opportunity for all students regardless of their sexual orientation. This is included in its equal opportunities and behaviour policies and the curriculum. We will ensure all gay, lesbian or bi-sexual pupils, or the children of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transsexual parents, are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

At Hillcrest School we are committed to providing a safe environment for all pupils and will apply the schools anti-bullying policy to deal with all instances of homophobic bullying or abuse, including online. Homophobia is a dislike or fear of someone who is, or is perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual. Reaction can vary in intensity from passive resentment to active victimisation. We seek to create an environment in which pupils, staff and parents are free to be themselves and experience acceptance from all other members of the school community.

We follow the DfE 'Relationship and Sex Education' Guidance (June 2019), which makes clear that teachers should deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support where necessary. We have a responsibility to explore the features of stable and healthy same sex relationships. We recognise we have a legal requirement to teach about the 'nature of marriage' when are delivering RSE. Teachers are encouraged to accurately state the facts about the marriage of same sex couples under the law of England and Wales, in a way that is appropriate to the age and level of understanding and awareness of the pupils. Teaching about marriage is done in a sensitive, reasonable, respectful and balanced way. Individual teachers are aware they are not under a duty to support, promote or endorse marriage of same sex couples. Teaching is based on facts and enables pupils to develop an understanding of how the law applies to different relationships. In addition, we ensure pupils understand the facts and laws about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity (including non-conformity) in an age-appropriate and inclusive manner.

Where individual teachers are concerned, having a view about something does not amount to discrimination. So, it would not be unlawful for a teacher to express personal views on sexual orientation provided that it is done in an appropriate manner and context (for example when responding to questions from pupils, or in an RE or Life Skills lesson). However, it should be remembered that schoolteachers are in a very influential position, and their actions and responsibilities are bound by much wider duties than this legislation. A teacher's ability to express his or her views should not extend to allowing them to discriminate against others.

Our curriculum is designed to inform pupils about the LQBTQ+ rights movement and the involvement of members of the LGBTQ+ community in culture, sport, science, music, philosophy and politics. We teach about the prevalence and resistance to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. As part of our provision in school, we endeavour to seek the views of LGBTQ+ pupils, staff, parents and governors in reviewing and updating policy and provision.

Section 12 - Gender Identity and Reassignment

Gender reassignment is defined in the Equality Act as applying to anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process (or part of a process) of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes. This definition means that to be protected under the Act, a pupil will not necessarily have to be undertaking a medical procedure to change their sex but must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender or proposing to do so.

Protection from discrimination because of gender reassignment in schools was new for pupils in the Equality Act, although school staff were already protected. This means that for the first time it will be unlawful for schools to treat pupils less favourably because of their gender reassignment and that schools will have to factor in gender reassignment when considering their obligations under the Equality Duty. The protection against discrimination because of gender reassignment now matches the protection because of sexual orientation in schools. A child who identifies as a different gender to their sex has not legally changed sex. They therefore

remain protected against discrimination based on their sex, as well as against discrimination based on the protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment'.

As outlined in the DFE: 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education' guidance (July 2026), we will ensure pupils are taught the facts and law about biological sex and gender reassignment to emphasise people have legal rights by virtue of their biological sex which are different from the rights of those of the opposite sex with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. Teaching staff will remain mindful to avoid endorsing any particular view in the current debate about biological sex and gender reassignment or teach it as a fact, ie – not teach as fact that all people have a gender identity.

As a single-sex school, we cannot refuse admission or encourage parents to remove their child from school because of their declared gender identity, or they dress in the style of the opposite sex. This would be direct gender reassignment discrimination as the child remains their actual sex and should be included in a single sex school.

A child also experiencing gender questioning and/or severe 'gender dysphoria' (a state of anxiety, discomfort or distress because of the mismatch between their perceived identity and their sex) may also be covered by the protected characteristic of disability of the anxiety prevents them from undertaking normal day-to-day activities.

At Hillcrest School we will make sure that all gender variant pupils, or the children of transgender parents, are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. Staff recognise it is unlawful discrimination for a teacher to single out a pupil undergoing gender reassignment and embarrass them in front of the class because of this characteristic. No pupil should feel they need to be a 'stereotypical' girl or boy (i.e. - physical appearance) to fit in at school. We will not discriminate against a pupil because they are gender non-conforming or identity as transgender or non-binary, i.e. - when using single-sex facilities in school.

We recognise that a pupil may request that peers and staff use a 'preferred pronoun' (i.e. - she/her, he/him, it/they/them) but they cannot compel this. If a pupil changes their name legally, we will use this new name. Where appropriate and after consultation with parents/carers, we will allow a pupil to use an informal forename (nicknames or shortened versions) chosen by the pupil, even if it differs from the name recorded on their birth certificate. We will not agree to use a name or pronoun for a child that they keep secret from parents/carers.

Information sharing is key to safeguarding procedures in school. Staff will share information with the DSL about a pupil who discloses that they feel like their body is 'wrong' after talking to a stranger on the internet, or that they are binding their breasts'. Staff are aware that pupils experiencing gender-identity issues may also raise safeguarding concerns, such as significant changes in behaviour and performance, mental health issues, self-harm, self-medication, emotional or sexual experiences in which they may have been significantly harmed, or in relationships that put them in danger. A pupil disclosing gender identity issues will be reported and supported in line with our usual safeguarding practice, including communication with parents and external agencies, as required.

Section 13 - Child-on-Child Abuse and Sexual Harassment

In line with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2025), we recognise that being subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment (including online), may breach some or all of a child's human rights, as outlined in the 'Public Sector Equality Duty'.

Sexual harassment is defined in the Equality Act as 'unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature' which violates a person's dignity, makes them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and creates a hostile and offensive environment.

As outlined in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2026), child-on-child abuse is abuse by one or more students against another student. It can manifest itself in many ways and can include:

- bullying (including cyber-bullying, misogyny, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate relationships between peers;
- physical abuse (hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm);

- sexual violence and harassment;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos, including the production and distribution of pornography and the use of AI generated content imagery;
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- upskirting (which is a criminal offence), which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm; and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Hillcrest School believes that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and has a zero-tolerance approach. We recognise the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between different groups and foster good relations between different groups. Abusive comments and interactions, including online, should never be passed off or dismissed as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. Nor will harmful sexual behaviour be dismissed as the same or 'just having a laugh'. There are clear links between sexism and misogyny and violence against women and girls, and staff will challenge such ideas and behaviours. All reports child-on-child abuse will be treated as a safeguarding matter and in line with our Child Protection and Behaviour policies.

Section 14 - Pregnancy and Maternity

Protection for pupils from discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity in schools is covered in the Equality Act. This means it is unlawful for schools to treat a pupil less favourably because she becomes pregnant or has recently had a baby, or because she is breastfeeding.

Local authorities have a duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to arrange suitable full-time education for any pupils of compulsory school age who would not otherwise receive such an education. This could include pupils of compulsory school age who become pregnant or who are parents. In particular, where pupils are unable to attend their previous school, the local authority would need to consider whether this duty is applied. 'Suitable education' should meet the individual needs of the pupil and must take account of their age, ability, aptitude and individual needs including any special educational needs they may have.

Hillcrest School recognises that the Equality Act (2010) extends protection against discrimination on grounds of pregnancy or maternity to pupils, so it will be unlawful for the school to treat a pupil unfavourably because she is pregnant or a new mother. The Hillcrest school will engage fully with the Teenage Pregnancy Unit to ensure appropriate health, emotional and academic support is in place both before and after the pupil gives birth.

Section 15 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Hillcrest School welcomes pupils with wide ranging academic abilities. The school strives to provide a full and balanced curriculum for all its pupils in a professional and caring environment. Learning support is a valuable resource in meeting this provision. A pupil is considered to require learning support if they have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of pupils in their year group or they have a disability which either prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities of a kind usually provided for pupils of their age.

The SENDCo at Hillcrest School is Ms Jacobs. We are committed to the principle that all pupils are entitled to have access to all the work carried out throughout each academic year, irrespective of disability, gender or race, at an appropriate level to suit their capabilities. Integration, not isolation is our overall objective for SEND pupils. We can offer some support to children who prove to have mild specific difficulties with learning. We have some pupils with diagnosed specific learning difficulties, such as autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia. Some pupils have special needs relating to health problems. We encourage close partnerships between parents, the class teacher and any special educational needs teachers involved with the child. The pupil's progress is carefully monitored, recorded and reviewed regularly. Assessment procedures for children with SEND are dealt with sensitively e.g. small groups or 1:1 support for these children with Education Health Care plans. We also work with other agencies, e.g. Pupil Support Services, Speech Therapists, and Educational Psychologists (consulted when

necessary). It is, however, essential that the school is made fully aware of any pre-assessed needs by parents/carers.

Objectives for Hillcrest School in relation to SEND:

- To ensure full entitlement and access for pupils with SEND to high quality education within a broad, balanced curriculum so that they can reach their full potential and enhance their self-esteem;
- To identify those pupils who have problems with learning which are significantly greater than the majority of pupils within the same age group and academic level;
- To make 'reasonable adjustments' to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs with appropriate provision and resources. On occasions it may be necessary to advise parents to seek specialist assessment and/or remedial teaching outside school;
- Advise and liaise with staff and parents on the identification of SEN and provide or refer for the assessment of these needs.

Identification, Assessment and Provision for all pupils with SEND

- The school will establish a regular programme of objective tests designed to detect signs of possible learning difficulties.
- Staff should collect relevant information to support their concerns and pass this information onto the SENDCo through the SEND Referral system
- Appropriate action will be discussed with parents i.e. further investigation, Educational Psychologists
- Through the Edukey programme we will monitor, review and aim to bridge gaps that have been identified and build on skills that need support.

Section 16 - English as an Additional Language

Hillcrest School is committed to providing a planned programme of personalised language support for all Newly Arrived and less proficient EAL students in Year 7-13 as we recognise that a lack of fluency in the English language should not be used as an indication of academic potential. The EAL programme is personalised based on pupil's English language proficiency. Newly Arrived Pupils and EAL pupils will be informally assessed at the interview stage and referred for further assessment to the EAL Teacher where English proficiency appears low. The level of support is then decided by the EAL Teacher and reviewed regularly throughout the school year to measure the impact on pupil progress.

The school will encourage the development of English as an Additional Language by:

- Encouraging the use of language development in purposeful contexts across the curriculum.
- Identifying and planning effectively the language demands of learning tasks.
- Paying attention to words and meanings embodied in each curriculum area and not assuming that EAL pupils already know them.
- Simplifying language to allow EAL pupils access to the curriculum but not simplifying lesson content or challenge.
- Staff providing good models of different uses of language, i.e. - Flash Academy
- Using additional support time as an integral part of the curriculum and lesson planning.
- Ensuring all pupils are entitled to the full curriculum.
- Distinguishing the difference between EAL and Special Educational Needs.
- Ensuring all languages, dialects, accents and cultures are equally valued.
- Providing staff (where appropriate) with significant information about an EAL pupil's educational background to support with their planning and differentiation.
- Encouraging EAL pupils to interact positively with their peers using English language.

In all meetings in school, bi-lingual pupils and parents will be allowed to request or nominate an interpreter when necessary. Our school website has a function to allow content to be translated into multiple languages to make it accessible to parents with English as a second language.

Section 17 - Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Hillcrest School seeks to provide a supportive and caring environment in which every individual is valued and where learning can take place in an orderly, purposeful and creative manner. It is the policy of the school to support children who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties and the pastoral work of all subject teachers, and other staff underpins this.

At Hillcrest, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our school community. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health procedures we promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health. We aim to ensure that pupils experiencing any form of mental health conditions can access all elements of school life and achieve in line with all other pupils.

To ensure this we have a trained Mental Health Champion and pupils have access to our Safeguarding and Well-Being Co-ordinator throughout the day, who will also assess and refer pupils and families to external organisations, as required.

Whilst the school's wish is to support pupils who are experiencing difficulties of this kind, this cannot be at the expense of the well-being and learning of other pupils, and parents of children with extreme difficulties may be placed on six-week passport or longer-term off-site direction placements to receive the additional support they may require supporting their behavioural needs.

Further information on strategies used to support pupils with emotional and behavioural issues can be found in our Behaviour Policy and Positive Mental Health Policy.

Section 18 - Disability Discrimination

The overriding principle of equality legislation is generally one of equal treatment. However, the provisions relating to disability discrimination are different in that you may, and often must, treat a disabled person more favourably than a person who is not disabled and may have to make changes to your practices to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that a disabled person can benefit from what you offer to the same extent that a person without that disability can. Discrimination is also defined rather differently in relation to disability.

The Equality Act (2010) defines disability as when a person has a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.' Some specified medical conditions, HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer are all considered as disabilities, regardless of their effect.

Hillcrest School will not tolerate any form of discrimination against disabled pupils. This includes the use of any derogatory term to indicate the disabled persons supposed mental capacity. No assumptions will be made about the general abilities of people who are disabled. The school will bear in mind that a child with special education needs (SEND) is not necessarily disabled and that a disabled child does not necessarily have SEND. The school will make every effort to ensure that its premises are accessible to people with all kinds of disabilities.

Hillcrest School is committed to making 'reasonable adjustments' so as not to disadvantage any current or prospective pupil as a result of a physical disability. Like many schools, subject areas with designated classrooms require pupils to move around the site, necessitating the use of steps or stairs to access classrooms. The school recognises that pupils with impaired mobility will be disadvantaged by these problems. As outlined in our 'Accessibility Plan', we take reasonable steps to ensure all students can fully access the school site, including lift access in different parts of the school, ramp access outside the main student reception and toilets on all floors of the main school building. Classrooms are organised with non-fixed furniture to facilitate reorganisation as required in normal teaching rooms.

We annually review our 'Accessibility Plan', detailing the planned improvements that will be made for:

- Increasing the access of disabled pupils to the school curriculum
- Improving the access of disabled pupils to the physical environment of the school
- Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils.

We fully recognise our duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' under the following circumstances:

- Where something we do places a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared to other pupils then the school must take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage.

- We will be expected to provide an auxiliary aid or service for a disabled pupil when it would be reasonable to do so and if such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces in comparison to non-disabled pupils.

We are not subject to the requirement of reasonable adjustment duty concerned with make alterations to physical features because this is already considered as part of our planning duties.

The Equality Act (2010) does not set out what would be a reasonable adjustment or a list of factors to consider in determining what is reasonable. We will therefore consider the reasonableness of adjustments based on the circumstances of each case. When assessing the reasonableness of an adjustment will be considering the financial or other resources required for the adjustment, its effectiveness, its effect on other pupils, health and safety requirements, and whether aids have been made available through the Special Educational Needs route.

Hillcrest School will continue, wherever possible, to provide equal access to all school activities for students with disabilities. Consideration will be given to the constraints of the physical nature of the site, the financial resources available to the school and health & safety implications. Hillcrest School is committed to making reasonable adjustments to allow the best possible experience for all of its pupils to enjoy sporting and a wide range of extra-curricular activities and school visits.

Section 19 - Accessibility of Written Information
The School Library contains information in a variety of formats and provision is made on an individual basis according to need.

In lessons and around school, Information is presented to groups in user friendly ways in order to ensure that all pupils benefit, including:

- Reading aloud
- Whiteboard presentations
- Describing diagrams
- Online resources, i.e. – Flash Academy
- Lap Top computers are provided for use by pupils with disabilities and visual impairments

Section 20 - External Services

Visitors
All visitors will be treated fairly and irrespective of age, gender, gender realignment, sexual orientation and identity, disability, race or religion.

Procurement, Lettings etc.
As far as the school has control over outside agencies and parties it will try to ensure that equality (in terms of the characteristics listed above) is built into any contractual arrangements with the school.

Section 21 - Complaints Procedure
Any complaints about discriminatory behaviour by members of staff, students, external visitors and community stakeholders should be referred directly to the Headteacher.

Any complaints about discriminatory behaviour from the Headteacher should be referred to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Section 22 - Review and Revision (and publication)

Monitoring and Review

This will be carried out by the Senior Leadership Team. Amendments may be made to the policy and action plans in the light of the monitoring and review. SLT will consider feedback from a range of sources including:

- Analysis of attendance and truancy figures;
- Analysis of exclusions;
- Incidents of racism, homophobia and sexism and all forms of bullying;
- Pupils achievement data for particular groups compared to National and Local Authority data;
- Feedback from Parents, School Parliament and other attached stakeholders;
- Any other information related to the Equality Act.