



# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIGNITY POLICY

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## **1. Policy statement**

Flixton Girls School (FGS) is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff, students and job applicants. We aim to create a learning and working environment in which all individuals are able to make good progress and best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.

With regard to students, as a designated single-sex school we are exempt from the equalities duty in respect of admitting only girls to the school. However, the school may exercise discretion in allowing admission of both male and female transgender students and supporting transgender students at any stage of their education at the school.

We do not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (**protected characteristics**).

The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity apply to the way in which staff treat students, parents, governors, third party organisations and former staff members as well as the way students treat each other and any member of the school community.

All members of the school have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat each other with dignity at all times, without discrimination, regardless of their status. Relevant training and education will be provided to promote community cohesion, respect and understanding.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

## **2. Who is covered by the policy?**

This policy covers all individuals attending and working at all levels and grades, including students, members of the senior leadership team, teachers and other classroom-based staff, learning mentors, operational staff, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers, interns, casual workers and agency staff.

## **3. Who is responsible for this policy?**

Our Board of Governors (the Board) has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility, including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the Headteacher.

All members of the senior leadership team within the school ("managers") must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, led by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. The Director of Business & Finance has overall responsibility for equal opportunities training.

## **4. Scope and purpose of the policy**

This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

We will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic circumstances and aim to support all individuals with a flexible approach.

## **5. Forms of discrimination**

Discrimination by or against a student or an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

## **6. Recruitment and selection**

We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job and are not disproportionate. Short listing of applicants will be done by more than one person wherever possible.

Job advertisements will avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which will only be used with the Director of Business & Finance approval. For example:

- ◆ Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- ◆ Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
- ◆ Positive action to recruit disabled persons.
- ◆ Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

Applicants will not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants will not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without the approval of a HR Advisor (who will first consider whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account).

We are required by law to ensure that all staff are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, will be expected to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, we monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect

an applicant's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before short listing, and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

## **7. Staff training and promotion and conditions of service**

Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups; unconscious bias training will be delivered regularly.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they equal opportunities for all.

## **8. Classroom-based staff responsibilities**

Teachers and learning support assistants are responsible for ensuring that language, questioning and classroom management strategies include and engage all students. Suitable resources are chosen which motivate and are sensitive to different groups, cultures and backgrounds, and opportunities found throughout the curriculum and pastoral system to effectively challenge stereotypes and what are thought to be stereotypical activities. The learning environment should also be set up effectively to reflect and promote equality and diversity.

Form time, assemblies and extra-curricular opportunities are used to celebrate diversity and promote harmony across the school community and beyond.

Staff are instructed to have an awareness of possible cultural assumptions and bias within their own attitudes and to reflect on and adjust their own practice where required. All staff have a responsibility to challenge those not working inclusively in a way that promotes change.

## **9. Termination of employment**

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

## **10. Disability discrimination**

If a staff member is disabled or becomes disabled, we will encourage them to tell us about their condition so that we can support them as appropriate.

If anyone experiences difficulties at school because of their disability, they may wish to contact their line manager or the Business and Finance Director to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we would explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor our accessibility plan and where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff, students and service users.

### **11. Fixed-term employees and agency workers**

We monitor our use of fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities.

### **12. Part-time work**

We monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under our Flexible Working Policy.

### **13. Breaches of this policy**

Any student or member of staff who believes that they may have been discriminated against are encouraged to raise the matter through our Complaints / Grievance Procedures. Individuals who believe that they may have been subject to harassment are encouraged to raise the matter with their line manager and / or a member of the HR team.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Individuals who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure / School Behaviour Policy.

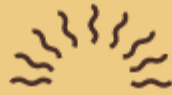
Any student or member of staff found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal, or in the case of a student, fixed –term or permanent exclusion. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

### **14. Monitoring and review of the policy**

This policy is reviewed by the Director of Business & Finance in conjunction with the Local Governing Body.

We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives. As part of this process we monitor the composition of job applicants and the benefits and career progression of our staff.

Staff members are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the Director of Business & Finance.



## **The Halo Code**

Our school champions the right of staff and students to embrace all Afro-hairstyles. We acknowledge that Afro-textured hair is an important part of our Black staff and students' racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious identities, and requires specific styling for hair health and maintenance.

We welcome Afro-textured hair worn in all styles including, but not limited to, afros, locs, twists, braids, cornrows, fades, hair straightened through the application of heat or chemicals, weaves, wigs, headscarves, and wraps.

At this school, we recognise and celebrate our staff and students' identities. We are a community built on an ethos of equality and respect where hair texture and style have no bearing on anyone's ability to succeed.