



## **Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy (Pupils)**

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**St. Francis' College**

October 2024

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## Introduction

The 'College' refers to all the staff and pupils of the Prep Department and Senior School which includes Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Pre-Prep (Key Stage 1), Prep (Key Stage 2), and Senior School (Key Stages 3-5).

St Francis' College is mindful of its own stated aims and objectives and of its legal obligations under current equal opportunities legislation (the Equality Act 2010). Additionally, ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils is an important aspect of the College's ethos and as a school with a Christian religious character.

This policy aims to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics
- Promote equality of opportunity for all members of the College community
- Comply with the College's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010

All members of the College community are expected to comply with this policy. All parents are expected to support the aims of this policy and the College's ethos of tolerance and respect.

## Equal Opportunities

The aim is to enable each pupil who enters the College to fulfil their potential, to value others and be valued as an individual, to be able to celebrate difference and recognise similarity and to have a sense of self-worth and dignity.

Admissions procedures at St Francis' College are applied to pupils irrespective of an individual's race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, (ie protected characteristics) to determine fairly that a pupil is likely to benefit from the type of education offered at the College. St Francis' is an academically selective school and admission is dependent on meeting its entrance requirements. Where there is competition for places, admission is determined by merit, although for entry into the Senior School preference will be given to pupils in the College's Preparatory Department, siblings, and then to external candidates according to overall attainment and date of registration with the College.

The College strives to provide a caring, informed and secure environment and recognises the richness a diversity of cultures, traditions, national backgrounds and religions brings to the College and to those within it, and encourages respect, responsibility and interest in the College community members' dealings with each other.

The College seeks to ensure provision of equality of opportunity consistent with the safety of pupils or their families. Occasions where apparent differences in the way pupils have been treated may be appropriate because of issues such as age, or on medical grounds. The College Rules and Procedures are applied to all pupils as are its Behaviour and Discipline and Anti-Bullying Policies.

St Francis' College is a girls only school from KS2 and, within the general exceptions of the Equality Act, is able to refuse to admit boys.

In strategic planning, in the admission of pupils, in the provision of curriculum and extra curriculum entitlement and in its day-to-day working, the College seeks to ensure equality of opportunity and equality of treatment for all pupils including the specific areas listed below as follows:

The College 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 College will not discriminate against a pupil on the grounds of any protected characteristic by excluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The College will:

- Treat all members of the College 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 Education Health Care Plan receive necessary educational and welfare support
- Monitor the admission and progress of pupils from different backgrounds
- Challenge inappropriate discriminatory behaviour by pupils and staff
- Offer all pupils access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of extra-curricular activities
- Work with parents and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in College
- Ensure that it reviews, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices

Use the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE to:

- Promote tolerance of 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 promote a culture of inclusivity.

The College recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability whether or not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms is unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

#### a) Race or National Background\*

Equality of opportunity and provision will be assured for all pupils regardless of their racial or cultural or national background. Racist abuse of pupils or discrimination against pupils on this basis is a serious College offence which will attract due investigation and, if appropriate, disciplinary sanctions. The College seeks to be understanding of the requirements of pupils from different racial, religious and cultural backgrounds and positively encourages pupils to share these with the rest of the College and to be proud of them.

In its teaching in general and in its Individual Needs provision, the College will be mindful of linguistic and cultural difficulties which pupils may encounter in the school environment. However, in order to cope with the high academic and social demands of the College, pupils must be good English speakers.

Pupils whose first language is not English should have received English language education before coming to the College and are admitted for a one-year probationary period. Tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) will be arranged as an Extra at parents' expense. Entry to the Sixth Form requires a standard of English equivalent to a minimum overall IELTS score of 5.5.

#### b) Disability

The College seeks to ensure equality of opportunity and provision for all pupils regardless of any physical or mental disability so long as the College is sure, when a pupil is considered for admission, that they are able to benefit fully from the College's facilities and the type of education which is offered at St Francis' College and that resources will be made available or adapted by the College according to the needs of any girl with a disability within what may be deemed reasonable. Individual support is provided by the Individual Needs staff, including support for girls with Statements of Individual Needs. Where the College is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, it will consult with parents about what reasonable adjustments, if any, the College is able to make. The College has an Accessibility Plan in place (available on request/website).

#### c) Religion

The College does not select for entry on the basis of religious belief, and pupils of all faiths, or none, are welcomed. The College ensures equality of opportunity and provision for all pupils irrespective of their religious background and regardless of whether their family practises a faith or not.

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 balance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Parents should be aware that all pupils at St Francis' College are required to wear a uniform until the Lower Sixth, and that a strict "business dress" code operates for the Lower and Upper Sixth. The Head will consider written requests from parents for variations in the uniform for reasons related to disability, gender reassignment and/or religious grounds provided that they are consistent with the College's ethos and its policy on health and safety. The Head may take expert advice, and will normally arrange to meet with the parents to discuss the implications of such a request.

#### d) Financial Circumstances

St Francis' College is an independent fee-paying school and as such parents, guardians or other persons responsible for the payment of fees for a pupil are responsible for ensuring the payment of all fees and extras punctually as the Head, Bursar and Governors may determine. Subject to this condition, the College shall endeavour to ensure, for all pupils attending the College, equality of opportunity and provision regardless of the social or financial circumstances of their families. A limited number of Bursaries are available and, when funds permit, awards are made on a parental means tested basis. Scholarships are awarded on pupils' abilities. All financial support is at the discretion of the Head and ILG.

## Monitoring

The Head will regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and report to the Governing body the policy's effectiveness in practice.

## Parental Concerns

St Francis' College hopes that there will be no complaints about the operation of its Equal Opportunities Policy, but the College recognises the right of pupils or their families to express concern where they feel that this may not be the case.

The normal mechanisms of raising concern by way of Form Tutors, Heads of Year, or the Senior Leadership Team may be used, as detailed in the College's Complaints Procedure, a copy of which can be provided on request and is available on the College website.

## Related Policies

Admissions Policy  
Anti-Bullying Policy  
Accessibility Plan  
Behaviour and Discipline Policy  
Disability Policy  
Individual Needs and EAL Policy  
Complaints Policy  
Financial Assistance Policy  
Scholarship Policy

## Version Control

Reviewed By	Head
Authorised By	Head
Effective From	October 2024
Next Review Due	October 2025

## **Notes For Information - Not Forming Part Of The Policy**

From 1 October, the Equality Act 2010 replaced all existing equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act.

The new Act provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It simplifies the law by removing anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time in the existing legislation, and it extends the protection from discrimination in certain areas.

As far as schools are concerned, for the most part, the effect of the new law is the same as it has been in the past – meaning that schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Protection is now extended to pupils who are pregnant or undergoing gender reassignment. However, schools that are already complying with the law should not find major differences in what they need to do.

The exceptions to the discrimination provisions for schools that existed under previous legislation – such as the content of the curriculum, collective worship and admissions to single-sex schools and those of a religious character, are all replicated in the new Act.

However, there are some changes that have an impact on schools as follows:

- It is now unlawful to discriminate against a transsexual pupil.
- It is now unlawful to discriminate against a pupil who is pregnant or has recently had a baby.
- New Positive Action provisions will allow schools to target measures that are designed to alleviate disadvantages experienced by, or to meet the particular needs of, pupils with particular protected characteristics. Such measures will need to be a proportionate way of achieving the relevant aim.
- Extending the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils.

## **Notes On College Procedures On Tackling Racism - Not Forming Part Of The Policy**

Staff awareness of racism is heightened through discussion and through their support of those in their care in form or lesson. Regular pastoral meetings are held where individual pupils are discussed by Subject, Form Boarding, Individual needs, EAL and Senior Staff. Such support falls within the Teachers' Standards in England; Part Two – Personal and professional conduct.

Staff and pupils are encouraged at every opportunity to learn about the differing groups represented in the College and to see any form of racism as unacceptable. This may be through assemblies (often through visiting speakers), Religious Studies and other lessons, the College Library, parent and guardian contacts, local groups and staff inset where possible. Boarding House staff especially are encouraged to learn as much as possible about the cultural background of their charges.

The College promotes good relations between different ethnic and cultural groups and encourages pupil friendships between these by a suitable mixing of groups in academic, practical and sports lessons and clubs, whilst at the same time recognising the need for the security and comfort of friendship groups of those with a similar background and, perhaps, language.

The College Library assists with race awareness by stocking books about other cultures, some of which are in other languages. The internet is a rich source of information about other cultures.

In the case of highlighting others' cultural backgrounds, we are always aware of a need for sensitivity in order that the girls concerned are not embarrassed by the information being made public.

As detailed in its Anti-Bullying and Behaviour and Discipline Policies, the College is opposed to all forms of racism and xenophobia, including those forms that are directed towards religious groups and communities. College responses may include sanctions, ranging from discussion with the Head or Deputy, to an acknowledgement by the pupil to others, to empathetic creative work or reading, to staff supervision at break times when incidents could easily occur, to a signed contract, to suspension or, ultimately, exclusion. It is incumbent on staff to report immediately to the Head or Deputy Head an instance of perceived racist behaviour. Any staff found to be discriminating racially would be severely dealt with according to the staff disciplinary procedures.

If a member of staff has a concern about a colleague, they should report this immediately to the Head as per Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022).