



## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY (PUPILS)**

A legal requirement and an ISI Reporting Standard

### **References:**

- A. Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- B. The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014.
- C: The Equality Act 2010.
- D. Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2021.
- E. National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, September 2022.
- F. ISBA Model Policy dated February 2012.
- G. SEN Policy
- H. Commentary on The Regulatory Requirements, ISI Handbook, March 2023

### **Introduction**

At Vinehall we recognise the benefits of having a diverse School Community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Pupils will be taught to value and respect others. The School is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and is committed to equality of opportunity for all members of the School Community. In the provision of equal opportunities, the School recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination on the basis of, but not limited to:

- disability
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief (including where an individual does not subscribe to a religion or belief)
- gender
- sexual orientation
- pregnancy and maternity

The School also opposes all bullying and unlawful discrimination on the basis that a person has a special educational need (SEN) or learning difficulty, or because English is an additional language.

The School aims to ensure that all policies and practices conform with the principles of equality. The School will address inappropriate attitudes and practices through staff leading by example, through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, through the supportive School culture and through the School's policies, and through the embedding of SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural education) within the curriculum.

Related policies: This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Admissions Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Prevention of Bullying Policy

- Accessibility Plan
- Special Educational Needs Policy.

We are non-selective academically and we believe that the educational experience can only be enriched if children are exposed to as wide a range of cultural experiences as possible whilst they are developing.

We also welcome applications from pupils with special needs and disabilities, and refer parents to our policies covering Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy (A2).

Bursaries and Awards are offered in order to make it possible for as many as possible who meet the School's admission criteria to attend the School. (Details of our provision for bursaries are available on our website or on request from Admissions).

### **Policy Aims**

Through the operation of this policy we aim to:

- communicate the commitment of the School to the promotion of equal opportunities
- promote equal treatment within the School for all members of the School Community
- create and maintain an open and supportive environment which is free from Discrimination
- foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the School
- remove or help to overcome barriers for pupils where they already exist
- ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against any
- ensure that all discriminatory words, behaviour and images are treated as unacceptable
- take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage

### **Achieving our Aims**

- All children have equal opportunity to access to the curriculum provided by the School. Children with specific difficulties (such as those with English as an additional language) receive a curriculum that is modified to suit their needs but remains broad and balanced. Our SEN department advises and supports all children who need help.
- All pupils are treated the same with regard to school rules, behaviour and sanctions.
- Resources are selected to both avoid bias and promote positive images/ role models for pupils.
- Pupils have equal access to after school activities and clubs.
- Role play, especially in the early years, presents varied opportunities to support the development of positive attitudes.
- School teams are selected on the basis of ability not gender (except as befits the game in question) and friendly matches are arranged to allow a range of children the chance to represent the School.
- Form leaders are chosen on a rotational basis so that all pupils have opportunity to play their part.

- Prefects are chosen solely on grounds of their own ability to contribute and support others and according to an extensive process of application, reference and research.
- Groupings, both in and out of the classroom, are not usually made on the basis of gender but staff should look carefully at the gender balance when groups are organised and address peer group pressures positively if they encounter them.
- Bias or attitudes in resources / literature are discussed with the pupils, taking into account their age / maturity.
- Children will be given opportunities to address and gain an understanding of equal opportunities issues including 'discrimination'.
- All staff should challenge stereotyped attitudes and be fair in the way they allocate time and resources.
- Teachers and classroom assistants should be alert to bias in reading material and be familiar with the aims and objectives of this policy.
- Teachers should be aware of course content that might encourage or discourage particular children.
- Staff should be aware of their own potential as a role model and focus of attention for pupils.
- Teachers should be alert to differing learning styles and use a variety of teaching techniques in their practice.
- The School will ensure that school publications do not display bias and, where possible, that displays around the School are non-stereotyped.
- A separate Disability and Accessibility Policy is available outlining our approach to disabled children and a three-year Accessibility Plan is in place to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum, improve the provision of information and the physical environment enabling disabled pupils to take advantage of the education and associated services offered by Vinehall.

Harassment in all its forms is unlawful and unacceptable; our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies contain clear procedures for dealing with unlawful discrimination.

A successful equal opportunities policy requires strong and positive support from parents and guardians, and full acceptance of the School's ethos of tolerance and respect.

### **Admission**

- Applicants: The School accepts applications from, and admits pupils irrespective of their Protected Characteristics and will not discriminate on these grounds in the terms on which a place is offered. The School will treat every application in a fair, open-minded way.
- Selection: Every application will be considered on its merits within the School's criteria for selection on grounds of the pupil's ability and aptitude, but this will not be done as a way of excluding pupils with a disability or special educational needs.

- Admissions Policy: The School's Admissions Policy reflects the School's approach towards equal opportunities and is consistent with this policy.

### **Education and associated services**

- Equal access: The School will afford all pupils equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects including all sports, irrespective of their Protected Characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and welfare.
- Positive action: The School may afford pupils of a particular racial group, or pupils with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the special needs of the pupils in that group, for example, special language training for groups whose first language is not English.
- Exclusions: The School will not discriminate against any pupil by excluding him or her from the School, or by subjecting him or her to any other detriment, on the grounds of his or her gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, or special educational needs.
- Teaching and School materials: Efforts are made to recognise and be aware of the possibility of bias (for example, gender or racial), so that this can be eliminated in both the School's teaching and learning materials and teaching styles. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum so as to avoid stereotypes and bias.
- Pupil interaction: All pupils are encouraged to work and play freely with, and have respect for, all other pupils, irrespective of their Protected Characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered towards all groups in society through the curriculum and ethos of the School, and pupils will be encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.
- Bullying: The School will not tolerate bullying or cyberbullying for any reason. The School's Prevention of Bullying Policy contains more details about the School's prevention of bullying practices.

### **School uniform**

- The same School Uniform applies equally to all pupils, irrespective of their gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Parents should be aware that all Vinehall pupils are required to wear a uniform. However, the Head will consider written requests from parents for variations in the uniform on religious grounds that are consistent with the School's ethos and its policy on health and safety. He may take expert advice and will normally arrange to meet with the parents to discuss the implications of such a request.
- Symbols of faith: Certain items of jewellery, such as the Kara bangle, and certain items of headwear, such as the turban and headscarves may be worn by pupils when doing so is genuinely based on manifesting religious or racial beliefs or identity. This is subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the School's existing School Uniform principles (in regards to, for example, the school colours). Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn under this section, the issue must be referred by the pupil or his or her parents to the Head Master, whose decision will be final, subject to the Complaints procedure.

- Disabled pupils: Reasonable adjustments may be required to the School Uniform for disabled pupils who require them. The pupil or his or her parents should refer the matter to the Head to ensure all reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate the pupil.

### Religious belief

- Religion: The School's religious ethos, services and school timetable are set in accordance with the Christian tradition, but the School respects the right and freedom of individuals to worship in accordance with other faiths, or no faith.

### Disability and Special Educational Needs

- Our approach: We are an inclusive School which welcomes members of the School Community with disabilities and special educational needs. We maintain and drive a positive culture towards inclusion of disabled people and those with special educational needs in all the activities of the School and we will not treat a member of the School Community less favourably on these grounds without justification. We will do all that is reasonable to ensure that the School's curriculum, ethos, culture, policies, procedures and premises are made accessible to everyone. Our Disability Policy and Policy on Special Educational Needs are consistent with this policy.
- Definitions: Children have Special Educational Needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a "*substantial and long term adverse effect*" on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activity (Equality Act 2010).
- Our approach: We are an inclusive School which welcomes members of the School Community with disabilities and special educational needs. We maintain and drive a positive culture towards inclusion of disabled people and those with special educational needs in all the activities of the School and we will not treat a member of the School Community less favourably on these grounds without justification. We will do all that is reasonable to ensure that the School's curriculum, ethos, culture, policies, procedures and premises are made accessible to everyone. Our SENDI policy is consistent with this policy.
- Definitions: Children have Special Educational Needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a "*substantial and long term adverse effect*" on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activity (Equality Act 2010).
- Reasonable adjustments: The School has an on-going duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs in respect of the education and associated services provided to ensure that such pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other pupils. This is a broad expression that covers all aspects of School life, for example:
  - the curriculum
  - classroom organisation and timetabling
  - access to school facilities
  - clubs and visits
  - school sports and
  - school policies
  - discipline and behaviour

Reasonable adjustments may typically include:

- making arrangements for a child in a wheelchair to attend an interview in an accessible ground floor room
- allowing extra time for a dyslexic child to complete an entrance exam
- providing examination papers in larger print for a child with a visual impairment
- rearranging the timetable to allow a pupil to attend a class in an accessible part of the building
- arranging a variety of accessible sports activities.
- taking into consideration the needs of pupils on the SEND register when considering disciplinary sanctions.

The School is not legally required to make adjustments which include physical alterations such as the provision of a stair-lift or new ground floor facilities, or a new library.

In making 'reasonable adjustments' the School is required to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils. The School will carefully consider any proposals made by parents and will not unreasonably refuse any requests for such aids and services.

### **Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs**

The School's Policy on Special Educational Needs includes details about the welfare and educational provision for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs.

### **Pupils with English as an Additional Language**

Tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be arranged at the parent's expense. EYFS children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in the English language through play and interaction with others. Staff will liaise with parents regarding the development of the child's first language at home.

Sensitive and appropriate support is also provided for boarders for whom English is not their first language in boarding as well as through the curriculum.

### **Provision for Pupils with Particular Religious, Dietary, Language or Cultural Needs**

The School will make individual provision for such pupils where necessary and in accordance with this policy.

### **Responsibilities**

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

Overall responsibility: The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the effective operation of the School's Equal Opportunities Policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. The Board of Governors has delegated to the Bursar day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its accessibility, availability, maintenance and review.

The Head, Senior Management Team, Pastoral Staff, Houseparents, Form Teachers, and the Medical staff all play an active role in monitoring the implementation of the School's policy on equal opportunities. In addition, use is made of Assemblies, Life Skills, RS, Drama, English and other lessons to:

- Promote tolerance of each other and respect for each other's position within the School community.
- Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
- Foster an open-minded approach and encourage pupils to recognise the contributions made by different cultures. Bias should be recognised.
- Understand why and how we will deal with offensive language and behaviour.
- Understand why we will deal with any incidents promptly and in a sensitive manner.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

Early Years Foundation Stage children at Vinehall refer to children from 2 to 5 years of age in our Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Kindergarten and Reception classes. Vinehall EYFS is included in the Equal Opportunities Policy (Pupils) with the whole school.

Vinehall values diversity and difference, and promotes equal opportunity for all children, including support for children with special educational needs or disabilities. The individual needs of all children are met through circle time, PSHE, assemblies, displays, Arts Festivals and other events. Inappropriate attitudes and practices will be challenged and children are encouraged to value and respect others. Staff consider how the individual needs of all children will be met and how all children, including those with disabilities or SEN will be included, valued and supported and how reasonable adjustments will be made for them. Individual support is considered in consultation with parents and other agencies as appropriate. For example, children with EAL are included in all activities and staff will consider how to best support these children on an individual basis.

Vinehall has and implements an effective policy ensuring equality of opportunities for supporting children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Vinehall is in receipt of Government funding and has regard to the SEN Code of Practice 2015 and all that entails. Vinehall EYFS ensures specific learning, developmental or physical needs are identified. Provision is then related to the specific need and recorded suitably; guidance is offered to adults on adapting daily provision. Parents and relevant agencies may need to be included in discussion or informed of provision. The effectiveness of our inclusive practice is reviewed, monitored and evaluated regularly. Reviews on individual children are shared and discussed with parents.

The SENCO is responsible for learning support in the EYFS at Vinehall. Further details of how individual needs are met and how the SEN Code of Practice is put into practice are described in the Special Needs Policy for the whole school, which includes the EYFS.

In addition to whole school Inset training and Pre-Prep meetings, the EYFS staff have separate meetings to review, monitor and evaluate inclusive practices and the findings inform the children's ILAS's, class planning, the department SEF and action planning.

### **Complaints**

We hope that you and your child do not have any complaints about the operation of our equal opportunities policy; but a copy of the School's Parental Complaints Procedure is available on our website or on request from the School Office.