



**ACORN HOUSE
COLLEGE**

Equal Opportunities Policy

Acorn House College

Authorised by	The principal and the proprietor
Date	December 2015
Effective date of the policy	January 2016
Circulation	Teaching staff, all other staff, volunteers, parents and students (on request)
Last review date	June 2018
Next review date	June 2019

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Introduction

The College

Acorn House College (College) is an independent mainstream day college for all young people aged from 13 – 19 years. The College welcomes staff, workers, volunteers, students, parents and applicants from different ethnic groups, backgrounds, nationalities and creeds. The term “college community” includes governors, staff, students, parents, visitors and volunteers and all stakeholders in the college.

College’s position

The College recognises the benefits of having a diverse college community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Students will be taught to value and respect others. Acorn House is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and is committed to equality of opportunity for all members of the college community. In the provision of equal opportunities, the College recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination on the bases of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

These are:

- gender/sex
- marital or civil partnership status
- pregnancy and maternity
- any gender reassignment (being or becoming a transsexual person)
- race
- disability¹
- sexual orientation
- religion or belief (including lack of religion or belief)
- age

The College also opposes all bullying and discrimination on the basis that a person has a special educational need or learning difficulty, health condition, of socio-economic status (which may or may not include social ‘class’) or because English is an additional language.

The College aims to ensure that all policies and practices conform with the principle of equal opportunities. The College will tackle inappropriate attitudes and practices through staff leading by example, through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, its pastoral programme, the student council, through the supportive College culture and through the College’s policies.

Related policies

This Equal Opportunities Policy is consistent with all of the College’s policies, including the Admissions Policy, Policy on Discipline and Behaviour, Exclusions, Dress Code, Code of Conduct,

¹ Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on ability to do normal daily activities.

Anti-Bullying Policy, Disability Policy, Accessibility Plan and the Special Educational Needs Policy, PSHE and Prevent Duty policy.

Format

All policies can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

Policy statement

Scope

This policy applies to all members of the current and prospective college community. The staff handbook provides further details on equal opportunities for staff.

Policy aims:

Through the operation of this policy we aim to:

- communicate the commitment of the College to the promotion of equal opportunities
- promote equal treatment within the College for all members of the college 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 College
remove or help to overcome barriers for students where they already exist
- ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against any person on any ground listed at paragraph 1.2
- make it clear that, and ensure, that all discriminatory words, behaviour and images are treated as unacceptable
- take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage (the 'reasonable adjustments' duty).

Forms of discrimination

Discrimination may be direct, indirect, arising from disability and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination:

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic as set out in paragraph 1.2 above. For example, rejecting a student or staff member applying to the college of a particular race because it is considered they would not "fit in" on the grounds of their race would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination:

Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for example, their sex or race. For example, a minimum height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If these criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with gender, they would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of gender.

Discrimination arising from disability: Discrimination arising from disability occurs when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and the treatment cannot be justified. For example, where a student with cerebral palsy who is a wheelchair user is told they will be unable to attend a school trip because there is no wheelchair access available and other options are not investigated.

Admission

Applicants:

The College accepts applications from, and admits, students irrespective of their or their parents' gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, special educational needs, marital/civil partnership status and from cis- and transsexual and pregnant candidates and will not discriminate on these grounds in the terms on which a place is offered, subject to details below. The College will treat every application in a fair, open-minded way.

Selection:

Every application will be considered on its merits within the College's criteria for selection on grounds of the student's ability and aptitude, but this will not be done as a way of excluding students with a disability or special educational needs, subject to details below.

Admissions Policy

The College's Admissions Policy reflects the College's approach towards equal opportunities and is consistent with this Policy.

Education and associated services

Equal access:

The College will afford all students equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects including all sports, irrespective of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare.

Positive action:

The College may afford students of a particular racial group, or students with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the special needs of the students in that group, for example, special language training for groups whose first language is not English.

Exclusions:

The College will not discriminate against any student by excluding him or her from the College, or by subjecting him or her to any other detriment, on the grounds of his or her gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief, pregnancy, maternity or special educational needs, subject to details below.

Teaching and College 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 College's teaching and learning materials and teaching styles. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum in order to ensure issues are delivered in a non-partisan manner. Through the curriculum, the Pride Project (see the appendix of the PSHE and Prevent Duty policy) and the delivery of all syllabuses the college pays a particular regard to actively promote the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Student interaction:

All students are encouraged to work and play freely with, and have respect for, all other students, irrespective of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief, pregnancy, maternity or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered towards all groups in society through the curriculum and ethos of the College, and students will be encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes. This is done both through the curriculum via the Pride project and through the meetings of the student council.

Bullying:

The College will not tolerate bullying or cyberbullying for any reason and has prepared a separate anti-bullying policy consistent with this policy. Specific types of bullying include bullying relating to race, religion, belief or culture, bullying related to SEN, learning difficulties or disabilities, bullying related to appearance or health conditions, bullying relating to sexual orientation, bullying of young carers or looked after children or otherwise related to home circumstances, sexist or sexual bullying. The College's Anti-bullying Policy contains more details about the College's anti-bullying practices.

College Dress Code:

The College Dress Code is consistent with this Policy. The same policy on dress code applies equally to all students, irrespective of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. However, the College will consider reasonable requests to alter the College Dress Code, for example, for genuine religious requirements and reasonable adjustments for disabled students.

Symbols of faith:

Certain items of jewellery, such as the Kara bangle, and certain items of headwear, such as the turban and hijab may be worn by students 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 College's existing dress code principles. Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn under this section, the issue must be referred by the student or his or her parents to the Principal, whose decision will be final, subject to the complaints procedure.

Disabled students:

Reasonable adjustments may be required to the Dress Code for disabled students who require them. The students or his or her parents should refer the matter to the Principal to ensure all reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate the student.

Religious belief

Religion

The College is not affiliated to any religion or ethos, but the College respects the right and freedom of individuals to worship in accordance with other faiths, or to follow no faith, subject always to their respecting the rights and freedoms of the college community as a whole and considerations of safety and welfare.

Disability and special educational needs

Our approach

We are an inclusive College which welcomes members of the college 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 College and we will not treat a member of the college community less favourably on these grounds without justification. We will do all that is reasonable to ensure that the College's curriculum, ethos, culture, policies, procedures and premises are made accessible to everyone. Our accessibility policy and plan and policy on Special Educational Needs are consistent with this policy. For a copy of these policies please contact the College office.

Definitions

Students 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). For further clarification please refer to the policies mentioned above.

Reasonable adjustments

The College has an on-going duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled students and students with special educational needs in respect of the education and associated services provided to ensure that such students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other students. This is a broad expression that covers all aspects of college life, for example: the curriculum, classroom organisation and timetabling, access to college facilities, clubs and visits, college sports and college policies. Reasonable adjustments may typically include:

- making arrangements for a student in a wheelchair to access the curriculum from classrooms on the ground-floor
- Providing large-print versions of handouts, examination scripts and documentation for the visually impaired
- Allowing people who are unable to climb stairs due to a disability access to the lift usually reserved only for staff
- Making a carparking space on the college site available for visitors who are unable to walk from the shared carpark situated off-site

The College is not legally required to make adjustments which include:

- physical alterations such as the provision of a stair-lift or new ground floor facilities
- large LCD screen computers and disability-trained classroom assistants.

Auxiliary aids

In accordance with the Equality act 2010, the college will provide "auxiliary aids" to students who require as part of their SEN provision which may be a part of a formal SEN statement. In circumstances in which the auxiliary aids are not part of a student's SEN provision, the college will decide whether provision of such aids is a reasonable adjustment to allow that student to access the curriculum and/or college site and/or facilities.

Informing the College

In accordance with the College's terms and conditions, parents of students must notify the Principal in writing if they are aware or suspect that the student (or prospective student) has a disability or if they (either parent), the student (or prospective student), or any close relations have at any time had, or currently have a learning difficulty. Prospective parents are invited at interview to give details of the student's disability when applying for a place at the College. Parents must provide copies of all written reports and other relevant information on enrolment. Providing the College with such information will enable the College to support the student as much as possible. Confidential information of this kind will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis. If a parent chooses not to supply this information on enrolment, the college may not be able to provide the support required.

Admission of students with special educational needs and/or

a disability

Applications for a place at the College will be considered on the basis that 'reasonable adjustments' (see definition above) have been made by the College in order to cater for the student's special educational needs and/or disability. The College will not offer a place if, after reasonable adjustments have been made, the College will not be able to provide adequately for the student's physical and educational needs. The College shall inform the parents of their decision and give details of the reasonable adjustments they are going to make or give reasons why an offer of a place has not been made.

Existing students

Where the College becomes aware of a disability or special educational need of an existing student, the College will do all that is reasonable to assist the student whilst at the College, which may include making 'reasonable adjustments'. If in the professional judgement of the Principal, and after consultation with the parents and the student (where appropriate), the College cannot provide adequately for the student's physical and educational needs after all reasonable adjustments have been made, parents will be asked to withdraw the student, without being charged fees in lieu of notice. The College will do what is reasonable to help parents to find an alternative placement which will provide the student with the necessary environment and level of teaching and support.

Access

The College will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether disabled users of the premises are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and proportionate, the College will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises. The College has an Accessibility Plan, which is reviewed on a regular basis and is available on request from College Office.

Staff responsible

The Principal is responsible for Special Educational Needs matters at the College. The college also has the support of the Regent Group SENCO.

Students with statements of special educational needs

Welfare and education

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

Students with English as an additional language

Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) will receive additional learning support if this is considered necessary to allow them to access the curriculum. The College will consult with the student and the parents as appropriate.

Welfare

The College has appropriate welfare support for all such students through the Personal Tutoring and pastoral care systems. All students have a personal tutor with whom they meet once per week. The college has a suggestions box, prefect system, student councils and Head Students who are elected by their peers as liaison between staff and students. Acorn House does not have a mentoring scheme but is planning to introduce one in the 2018/19 academic year after careful planning and training.

Provision for students with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs

Religion

The College does have a quiet reflection room (room 3F on the third floor of the Old Building). This is a non-denominational room where any student may go to pray, meditate, think, contemplate and reflect quietly. The college does not provide religious articles but students are welcome to bring items such as prayer mats to the college for use in this room providing their use is safe, does not contravene health and safety rules and guidelines and does not deliberately cause offense to any other member of the college community subject to the college's complaints procedure. If there is any doubt or concern about the use of this room or articles brought to the college, these should be brought to the principal whose decision will be final subject to the college's complaints procedure. The College may withdraw this facility at any time and without notice for example grounds of health and safety, consideration of other students and staff members, space restrictions, likelihood of complaints or for any other reasonable reason. The college will seek to provide an alternative space should this occur, but is not obliged to do so.

Religious Festivals

Students must request leave from the principal for religious festivals as they would for any other absence. The College's decision to grant authorised absence will be final subject to the complaints procedure.

Language

All students are encouraged to speak English at all times whilst on the College premises. Speaking languages others cannot understand may be considered discriminatory to those who cannot understand the language being spoken.

Dietary needs

The College does not provide catering facilities but on occasions when catering is provided will consider requests for particular dietary needs and meet these requests whenever reasonably possible.

Responsibilities

All members of the college community are expected to comply with this policy and therefore to treat others with dignity at all times without regard to their gender, marital/civil partnership status, race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, maternity, gender reassignment, religion, belief or age.

Overall responsibility

The Chair of governors has overall responsibility for the effective operation of the College's Equal Opportunities Policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. This responsibility is delegated day-to-day to the principal.

Management

Those working at a management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of the College with regard to equal opportunities.

Monitoring and review

Monitoring

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively with respect to admission and selection, and to identify those sections of the local community which may be under-represented in the College, the College monitors applicants' gender, nationality, disability and religion or belief confidentially as part of the Admissions procedure.

Review

The principal is responsible for the ongoing monitoring and regular analysis of the data relating to equality and will arrange for the taking of appropriate positive steps to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination where necessary. The principal and compliance manager are responsible for reviewing whether the aims of this Policy are carried out throughout all areas of the College and taking appropriate action where necessary. This policy is reviewed annually by the Principal and the compliance manager. Recommendations for any amendments are reported to the Governors.

Reporting and recording incidents of discrimination

All instances of discrimination will be documented and stored in a file stored in a secure, locked cupboard with restricted access. Details may also be stored in secure areas of the college database with access given only to those who may require it. This may mean only the principal.

Questions about this policy

Questions about the content or application of this policy, should be made directly to the principal.

Complaints

If you believe that you have received less favourable treatment on any of the unlawful grounds listed above, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to your detriment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the College's formal Complaints Procedure. For a copy of the College's Concerns and Complaints Policy, please contact the college office. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the complaints procedure.

Reports

If you would like to report a breach of this policy that does not constitute a complaint under the paragraph above, please contact the Principal.

Enforcement

The college will treat seriously and urgently investigate every complaint and report. Disciplinary action may be taken against any member of the college community who is found to have acted in contravention of this policy.

Record

All reported breaches of this policy will be recorded and this record will be reviewed annually by the Principal.

Publication

This policy will be available on the College's website and on request from the college office.