

Equal Opportunities Policy

Primary person responsible for updates to this policy: Head of College

Last review date: August 2026

Next review date: June 2027

Relevant ISI coding (if applicable)

Circulation: This policy has been adopted by the governors and is available to parents on request. It is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers and applies wherever they are working with children.

‘Parents’ refers to parents, guardians and carers.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Equal Opportunities Policy to be read in conjunction with:

- **Abbey DLD Recruitment Policies**
- **Anti-Bullying Policy**
- **PHSE Schemes of Work**
- **Three Year Accessibility Plan**
- **Admissions Policy**
- **Complaints Policy**

1.1 Abbey College Manchester is a co-educational, independent day and boarding College for students aged 14-23 years. It welcomes staff, workers, students, parents, applicants and governors from all different ethnic groups, backgrounds and creeds.

1.2 The College recognises the benefits of having a diverse community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Students will be taught to value and respect others. The College is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and is committed to equality of opportunity for all its members. The College recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes unlawful discrimination on the basis of the following “protected characteristics”:

- sex;
- marital or civil partnership status;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- gender reassignment;
- race;
- disability;
- 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, or because English is an additional language. The College aims to ensure that all policies and practices conform with the principle of equal opportunities and that the College complies with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The College will tackle inappropriate attitudes and practices through staff leading by example, through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, through the supportive College culture and through the College’s policies. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) education, including the promotion of the British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs is embedded into the college’s culture and operations.

1.3 Related policies: This Equal Opportunities Policy is consistent with all of the College's policies, including the Admissions Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, SEND Policy. This Policy and all College policies can be made available in larger print or more accessible format if required.

2.0 Policy statement

2.1 Scope: This policy applies to all current and prospective members of the College Community.

2.2 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;
- 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;
- be alert to the early signs of needs that could lead to later difficulties, and respond as appropriate;
- remove or help to overcome barriers for students where they already exist;
- ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristic listed at paragraph 1.2;
- make it clear, 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).

3.0 Forms of discrimination

Discrimination may be direct (including discrimination based on perception and association) or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally. Discrimination can also arise from disability or a failure to make reasonable adjustments (for disabled people). Harassment and victimisation are also unlawful.

4.0 Admission

4.1 Applicants: The College accepts applications from, and admits, all prospective students irrespective of any 'protected characteristic' or special educational needs and will not discriminate on these grounds in the terms on which a place is offered, subject to section 8, below. The College will treat every application in a fair, open-minded way.

4.2 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 any protected characteristic or special educational needs, subject to section 8 below.

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

5.0 Education and associated services

5.1 Equal access: The College will afford all students equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects, irrespective of any 'protected characteristic' or special educational needs, subject to our reasonable adjustments' duty and considerations of safety and welfare.

5.2 Positive action: The College may afford students, for example, 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, language training for groups whose first language is not English.

5.3 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 any 'protected characteristic' subject to section 8 of this Policy.

5.4 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 selected for all areas of the curriculum so as to avoid stereotypes and bias.

5.5 Student interaction: All students are encouraged to work and socialise freely with, and have respect for, all other students, irrespective of any 'protected characteristic', subject to our reasonable adjustments' duty and considerations of safety and welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered through the curriculum and ethos of the College, and students will be encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.

5.6 Bullying: The College will not tolerate bullying or cyber-bullying for any reason. Specific types of bullying include bullying relating to any 'protected characteristic' or bullying related to SEN, learning difficulties or bullying related to appearance or health conditions. See the College's Anti-bullying Policy for more details.

6.0 Student Dress

6.1 All students must follow the Student Dress Code.

6.2 Symbols of faith: Students are not discouraged from wearing genuine symbols of faith, providing these do not transgress Health and Safety requirements.

7.0 Religious Belief & Culture

7.1 Religion: The College's ethos is non-denominational, and all are expected to respect the rights and freedoms of the College Community as a whole and considerations of safety and welfare.

7.2 Religious Dietary Requirements: We are able to provide for special dietary requirements providing that students' needs are made known to the College at admission, and such information is actively sought on our application form. We are also to help students to find information about special dietary requirements, for example, locations of halal/kosher restaurants in Manchester.

7.3 Prayer: we do not have a dedicated prayer room, however if students need a quiet space in which to pray during the day, then a suitable room will be provided whenever possible. A student should speak to a Head of Year in the first instance, who will be able to check which room(s) are available.

7.4 Culture: Suitable events may be promoted using notice boards, e-mail communication, tutor groups and other appropriate channels. We encourage students to celebrate a range of cultural events based on the needs and preferences of our student body and the Student Council is a primary means of facilitating this. The college will not promote or facilitate any event which undermines Fundamental British Values.

8.0 Disability and special educational needs

8.1 Our approach: We are an inclusive College which welcomes members of the College Community with disabilities and special educational needs. 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.

8.2 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' 'long-term', adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (Equality Act 2010). Not all students with a special educational need are disabled.

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

- making arrangements for a prospective student in a wheelchair to attend an interview in an accessible ground floor room;
- allowing extra time for a dyslexic student to complete an exam;
- providing examination papers in larger print for a student with a visual impairment

The College will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a student's disability.

The College is not legally required to make physical alterations as part of the reasonable adjustments' duty, such as the provision of a stair-lift or new ground floor facilities, or a new

library. However, the College has an Accessibility Plan in place which considers what reasonable and proportionate steps can be taken to alleviate any substantial disadvantage caused to disabled Students by the College's physical environment.

8.4 Informing the College: In accordance with the College's terms and conditions, parents of students must notify the Head of College 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), has a learning difficulty. Prospective parents must give details of any special circumstances relating to their child when [completing the Registration Form /applying for a place at the College] which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and ability to fully participate in the education provided by the College. The College requires this information so that the College can consider what reasonable adjustments, if any, can be made in order to accommodate the student in the admissions process and should an offer of a place be made.

Parents/agents must provide copies of all written reports and other relevant information upon request. Providing the College with such information will enable the College to make a fair assessment and support the student as much as possible. Confidential information of this kind will only be communicated on a 'need-to-know' basis.

8.5 Admission of students with a disability: The College will consider what 'reasonable adjustments' (if any) can be made by the College in order to cater for a student's disability should an offer of a place be made. The College will not offer a place if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the College will not be able to cater adequately for the student's needs. The College shall inform the parents of their decision and give reasons why an offer of a place has not been made.

8.6 Existing students: Where the College becomes aware of a disability of an existing student, the College will do all that is reasonable to assist the student whilst at the College, which may include considering what 'reasonable adjustments can be made to accommodate the student'. Parents will be asked to withdraw the student, without being charged fees in lieu of notice and with the acceptance deposit returned, if in the professional judgement of the Head of College, and after consultation with the parents and the student (where appropriate), the College cannot provide adequately for the student's needs after all reasonable adjustments have been considered. The College will do what is reasonable to help parents to find an alternative placement which will provide their child with the necessary environment and level of teaching and support.

8.7 Access: Please see the College's Accessibility Plan. Where possible and proportionate, the College will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises.

9.0 Students with English as an additional language

9.1 Students with English as an Additional Language (**EAL**) will receive additional learning support as appropriate. The College has appropriate welfare support for all such students through its supportive culture.

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

10.1 The College will consider all requests from students with religious, dietary, language or cultural needs and will make reasonable efforts to accommodate these requests where appropriate.

11.0 Responsibilities

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

11.2 **Overall responsibility:** The Head of College and Governors have overall responsibility for the effective operation of the College's Equal Opportunities Policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. The Governors have delegated to the Head of College day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its accessibility, availability, maintenance and review.

11.3 **Management:** Those working at senior 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.

12.0 Monitoring and review

12.1 **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, race, disability and religion or belief as part of the Admissions procedure.

12.2 **Review:** The Head of College is responsible for the on-going monitoring and 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 Head of College. Recommendations for any amendments should be made to the Head of College.

13.0 Reporting and recording incidents of discrimination

13.1 **Questions about this policy:** If you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Head of College.

13.2 **Complaints:** Students who feel they are being discriminated against should talk to a member of staff who will consider their concern or complaint. Alternatively, if parents feel that this policy has been breached or they have any concerns they should raise their concern or complaint through the College's formal Complaints Procedure. A copy of the Complaints Policy is available on the College website. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the complaints procedure.

13.3 **Enforcement:** We 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.

13.4 **Record:** All reported breaches of this policy will be recorded, and this record will be reviewed annually by the Head of College.

14.0 Publication

14.1 This policy will be available on request from college.