EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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Policy Statement

Amberley Court School (ACS) is committed to achieving a working and living environment which provides equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, class, sexual orientation, age, marital status or disability. The service is also committed to building a workforce and student body which is diverse and reflects the community around us.

Aim of the Policy

We believe that the **Equality Act,** 2010, provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the **Human Rights Act 1998**.

The aim of ACS is to promote equal treatment for all employees and students irrespective of race, colour, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, political belief, disability, age, gender, or marital status, and that this is managed in compliance with equal opportunities legislation and accepted codes of a good service. We aim to ensure that no job applicant, staff member, volunteer, organisation or individual we provide services to will be discriminated against by us.

The policy sets out the actions that this school will undertake in order to meet the above Regulations and Standards.

This policy will inform all other school policies, but will be of particular relevance to the following:

- School Accessibility Plan
- ACS 'Respect' agenda
- Environmental Policy
- Safer Recruitment Strategy
- Complaints and Representation Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy

POLICY CHANGES DUE TO THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act 2010 aims to 'deliver a simple, modern and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society'.

The single biggest piece of discrimination legislation created in this country draws together all the important anti-discrimination laws introduced in piecemeal fashion since the 1970's. Its overarching ambition is to simplify and standardise the law to make it easier for people to understand and so to follow.

AGE

The Act protects people of all ages. However, different treatment because of age is not unlawful direct or indirect discrimination if you can justify it, i.e. if you can demonstrate that it is a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim. Age is the only protected characteristic that allows employers to justify direct discrimination.

DISABILITY

The Act has made it easier for a person to show that they are disabled and protected from disability discrimination. Under the Act, a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, which would include things like using a telephone, reading a book or using public transport.

As before, the Act puts a duty on an employer to make reasonable adjustments for staff to help them overcome disadvantage resulting from an impairment (e.g. by providing assistive technologies to help visually impaired staff use computers effectively).

The Act includes protection from discrimination arising from disability. This states that it is discrimination to treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability (e.g. a tendency to make spelling mistakes arising from dyslexia). This type of discrimination is unlawful where the employer or other person acting for the employer knows, or could reasonably be expected to know, that the person has a disability. This type of discrimination is only justifiable if an employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Additionally, indirect discrimination now covers disabled people. This means that a job applicant or employee could claim that a particular rule or requirement you have in place

disadvantages people with the same disability. Unless you could justify this, it would be unlawful.

The Act also includes a new provision which makes it unlawful, except in certain circumstances, for employers to ask about a candidate's health before offering them work.

Gender Reassignment

The Act provides protection for transsexual people. A transsexual person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. The Act no longer requires a person to be under medical supervision to be protected – so a woman who decides to live as a man but does not undergo any medical procedures would be covered. It is discrimination to treat transsexual people less favourably for being absent from work because they propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment than they would be treated if they were absent because they were ill or injured.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

The Act protects employees who are married or in a civil partnership against discrimination. Single people are not protected.

Pregnancy and Maternity

A woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled. During this period, pregnancy and maternity discrimination cannot be treated as sex discrimination.

We will not take into account an employee's period of absence due to pregnancy-related illness when making a decision about her employment.

Race

For the purposes of the Act 'race' includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

Religion or Belief

In the Equality Act, religion includes any religion. It also includes a lack of religion, in other words employees or jobseekers are protected if they do not follow a certain religion or have no religion at all. Additionally, a religion must have a clear structure and belief system. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or a lack of such belief. To be protected, a belief

must satisfy various criteria, including that it is a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered a protected religion or religious belief.

Discrimination because of religion or belief can occur even where both the discriminator and recipient are of the same religion or belief.

Sex

Both men and women are protected under the Act.

Sexual Orientation

The Act protects (LGBTQ+) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning and other sexual identities and orientations not specifically covered.

Other Provisions Covered Under the Act

- The basic framework of protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in services and public functions, premises, work, education, associations and transport.
- Changing the definition of gender reassignment, by removing the requirement for medical supervision.
- Levelling up protection for people discriminated against because they are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic, so providing new protection for people like carers.
- Clearer protection for breastfeeding mothers.
- Applying the European definition of indirect discrimination to all protected characteristics.
- Extending protection from indirect discrimination to disability.
- Introducing a new concept of “discrimination arising from disability”, to replace protection under previous legislation lost as a result of a legal judgment.
- Applying the detriment model to victimisation protection (aligning with the approach in employment law).
- Harmonising the thresholds for the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

- Extending protection from 3rd party harassment to all protected characteristics.

- Making it more difficult for disabled people to be unfairly screened out when applying for jobs, by restricting the circumstances in which employers can ask job applicants questions about disability or health.

- Allowing claims for direct gender pay discrimination where there is no actual comparator.

- Making pay secrecy clauses unenforceable.

- Extending protection in private clubs to sex, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.

- Introducing new powers for employment tribunals to make recommendations which benefit the wider workforce.

- Harmonising provisions allowing voluntary positive action.

ACS is committed to a policy of equal opportunities for all and requires all employees to abide by and adhere to this general principle, and to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. In particular:

- Discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, class, disability, sex, marital status or membership or non-membership of a trade union will not be practised nor tolerated.

- All employees, of whatever grade or authority, are expected to abide by and adhere to this general principle.

- Staff [and students], will be promoted, employed and treated fairly on the basis of their ability and merits, and accordingly to their suitability, and no-one will be disadvantaged by a condition or requirement, which is not justified by the genuine needs of their job or of the proposed job.

- ACS is committed to challenge any form of discrimination it encounters.

- In order to provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals, employment decisions at the service will be based on merit, qualifications and abilities.

- Employees, parents/carers or pupils with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the service are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the head teacher or company director/s.

- Any breach of this policy should be reported to the head teacher or company director. Breaches will be dealt with through the company's disciplinary procedures.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

At ACS we positively welcome and aim to support the growing diversity of the community we serve, and the people we employ. Our diversity is our strength, and we are committed to providing a good service to our many different communities, by a workforce that reflects the diversity of society.

We also acknowledge that we live in an unequal society in which many people face discrimination. We believe that equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination are fundamental human rights. We actively oppose all forms of discrimination and are committed to the principle that no person shall face discrimination by being treated unfairly or being denied access to services or employment opportunities.

We will not discriminate (indirect and direct) on the grounds of race, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, LGBTQ+, age, religious beliefs, HIV status, or disability (covering sensory and physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health status).

Discrimination as outlined above, and harassment is unacceptable and contrary to our explicit aim of providing quality services and recruiting and retaining diverse staff.

ACS recognises its responsibilities under the equality's legislation and related Codes of Practice.

Equality and diversity are majority issues, which concern the whole community:

- Young people
- Older people
- Men and Women
- People from black and minority ethnic backgrounds
- Faith groups
- Disabled people
- Mental and/or Learning Disability
- People identifying with a different gender
- LGBTQ+

Quality means equality in the services we plan and provide and in the staff we employ to provide those services. We cannot achieve our aim of providing high quality learning and teaching unless we take into consideration the diverse needs of all sections of our diverse communities.

We will build on the strengths of diversity and communicate with staff and our local communities to achieve a shared understanding of the local and national contexts within which we all work or live. This is key to all people who live, visit and work in the community,

feeling ‘safe’ and being able to ‘take pride’ in a school which values and respects its growing diversity and promotes good relations between all sections of its communities.

We intend to promote equality, value diversity and prevent discrimination through our roles as:

- Educating young people
- Employees
- Visitors and/or volunteers
- External contractors
- The community as a whole

Our various school policies detail how we intend to progressively achieve this through a programme of audit, review, impact/needs assessment, development of equality objectives and outcomes, monitoring, consultation, scrutiny and changes to how we work. This will be undertaken as part of a programme of continuous development and mainstreaming of equality/diversity considerations throughout the whole business.

OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- We will identify, tackle and prevent any form of institutional discrimination.

- We will promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all our communities.

- We will build on the strengths of diversity and aim to promote good relations between different communities.

- We will work with specific groups of people who are hard to reach and who may not have been provided with opportunities to voice their needs.

- We will particularly work with those groups who experience marginalisation, disadvantage and discrimination to discover previously unmet needs.

- We will implement an equalities management framework, which is based on key requirements of the Equality Standard, Race Equality Scheme and the Disability Discrimination Act. This will help us towards our goal of the mainstreaming of equality/diversity considerations and objectives.

- We will ensure that all our partners and contractors are informed of our equality/diversity commitments and work towards the adoption of a shared code of practice.

- We will monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school, the service delivery and employment to inform our progress, objectives and review of outcomes. We will also initiate changes where necessary.

- We will develop corporate consultation and review mechanisms as part of our commitment to on-going consultation with key stakeholders, partners and community/voluntary groups.

- We will ensure that all members, managers and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities under equalities legislation and ACS's policy and are provided with learning and development opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and competencies to facilitate their roles.

Our general commitments will also be translated through our particular responsibilities in relation to service delivery and employment areas.

Delivering Equal Opportunities

- We will work in partnership with staff, community/voluntary groups, parents/carers, and other stakeholders, in order to translate statutory requirements and local needs into meaningful and achievable equality/diversity objectives and outcomes.

- We will work to include the consideration and incorporation of diverse needs in all our key functions, policies, education and services. We aim to achieve this within a culture of continuous improvement.

- We aim to become an organisation where thinking about equality/diversity issues and objectives is integral to service delivery and review.

- We will produce good quality data in relation to school provision, community profiles and employment areas, in order to feed into our objective setting and review processes.

- We will promote equal access to services and accessible information about services.

- We will work towards identifying, understanding and eliminating barriers to equality of access, equality of treatment and equality of outcome in the services we plan and provide and the staff we employ to deliver them.

Employment

Inclusive organisation

- We will strive to achieve a representative and well-equipped workforce at all levels, to reflect and provide/commission services for the diverse communities we serve.

- We aim to become an inclusive organisation, where diversity is valued, respected and built.

Harassment and Bullying

ACS will not tolerate harassment or bullying of employees by other employees whatever their level and will take remedial action in accordance with the ACS's Policy Statements and Guidelines.

Our employees are our greatest assets. We will work in partnership with our employees at all levels and those who represent them. Through a programme of learning and development and the provision of information, we will strive to ensure that employees are aware of their individual and collective responsibilities under our Equality and Diversity Policy.

Positive Action

Where appropriate and allowed in law, ACS will implement Positive Action initiatives as defined by the Sex Discrimination and Race Relations Acts. Examples of Positive Action include staff training and development schemes, the use of specialist press for job advertising and the encouragement of applications for jobs from people because of their race, gender or disability, wherever they may be under-represented in the organisation's workforce.

ACS will action the *Accessibility Plan keeping within the target set. The monitoring of target and the smooth running of the implementation of the Accessibility plan will be the responsibility of the Managing Director.

**Please refer to: ACS - Accessibility Plan*

Training

All new staff should be encouraged to read the policy on equality as part of their induction process. They should then sign the attached sheet which helps prove that they have read and understood the policy.

Staff are also required to attend on-going, regular equality and diversity training updates.

Applicable Publications

Relevant national strategies, national service frameworks, and nationally agreed policy guidance and recommendations about involving people are published by the Department of Education, Department of Health and other government departments.

- SEND Code of Practice, 2014
- Equality and Human Rights Commission publications
- Making Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Employees
- Disability Health and Employment: Guide for Employers
- Top Tips for Small Employers
- A Guide to Employing Disabled People

The DfE publication, Equality Act 2010: Departmental Advice for School Leaders, School Staff and Governing Bodies in maintained schools and academies (DfE May 2014), is available to download from their guidance web page, and is particularly helpful in suggesting ways in which schools may wish to demonstrate compliance with the specific duties.

END

POSITION	**Headteacher**	**NAME**	**James Eagle**	**SIGNATURE**	***J Eagle***	**DATE**	**01/09/2026**
POSITION	**Governor**	**NAME**	**Dave Johns**	**SIGNATURE**	***D Johns***	**DATE**	**01/09/2026**
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