

# **Sydenham School**

## **Equal Opportunities**

### **Policy**

**Updated May 2016**

**To be reviewed May 2017**



## **Whole School Policy – Equal Opportunities**

### **Context**

Sydenham School has a very strong and deeply-held commitment to Equal Opportunities. This stretches back to the early days of the school and reflects its development into a diverse school with 71 languages over the last 100 years. The staff and governors serve a rich and broad community, in a comprehensive and inclusive inner city school, and have a very real sense of pride in what we do and what we achieve with our students.

### **Statement of Commitment**

#### **Ethos**

As a learning community, we are committed to maintaining an ethos that nourishes and supports each person in our care and each member of our staff, whatever their skills and abilities. Although our commitment to equal opportunities is absolute, we recognise that to be effective, this commitment needs continued effort. We also recognise that members of the school will need to engage individually with the complex issues of equality, often from different starting points, and that the role of the school is to facilitate this learning process in a spirit of mutual support.

For our learning community, equality of opportunity is defined by principles. At Sydenham School:

- We respect and celebrate our differences and similarities regardless of gender, culture, ethnicity, religion, academic ability, sexuality, age, background, or disability. We stand against discrimination towards individuals and/or groups.
- We are committed to providing dynamic and exciting opportunities for *all* students. This includes support for the development of the full range of learners – the most able who come to Sydenham above L5, low attainers who come into Sydenham below L4, learners with SEND, as well as those “in the middle” who can go quietly unnoticed. We value the contribution that each and every student can make. We aim to protect the rights of the whole school community to learn and be safe; this means that the school will take action when the good order of the school is undermined, and the learning opportunities of the majority in the school community are at risk.
- We recognise that we live in a highly complex society and that to ensure equality and achievement for all is a significant challenge. We also recognise that different views exist and that some students may come from homes, for example – where racist views exist, where girls are seen only in traditional female roles, where there might be prejudice against those of other faiths, or where religious teaching may conflict with views of modern life for example pre-marital sex or homosexuality or abortion. While the school’s position against intolerance, discrimination and prejudice is clear, we shall deal sensitively with others’ views, particularly where the students are concerned; it must be recognised, however, by all members of the school community, that the ethos of the school supports equality of opportunity and the rights of others. Our stand against intolerance, prejudice and discrimination is non-negotiable.
- We believe and understand that members of our community have different starting points and may have unequal beginnings and that we should always work towards addressing this imbalance. We believe that education and life-long learning are essential to a student’s life chances, her achievement and aspiration. We bring a range of different experiences, from which we can all benefit.
- We believe in inclusion and inclusive practices, and we shall work with all members of the school community to ensure that we support effort, perseverance, development, achievement and attainment, and staff will support those who are experiencing difficulty or challenge.

It is an expectation that these principles will be understood and respected, by all those who join or visit the school.

Sydenham School values and respects all its students, staff and parents and the richness of variety that our culturally-diverse school presents. We wish to provide, for every member of our school community, a learning experience which enables everyone to achieve in a wide variety of ways. As a girls' comprehensive school, with a mixed Sixth Form, we wish to prepare our students to be the thinking young women and young men of the future who will contribute actively and pro-actively to the communities in which they live.

**Through our Equal Opportunities Policy the school aims to:**

- Promote achievement in its widest sense, and enjoyment of life-long learning
- Support all members of the school community to understand that purposeful learning can take place through experimenting with new ideas, taking risks and making mistakes
- Develop excellent teaching which promotes and ensures high quality learning, so that students learn effectively and achieve at their highest level
- Create an environment that values everyone and the contribution that everyone can make
- Provide a safe and positive environment for all, and one which challenges discriminatory and anti-social behaviour
- Promote positive images and role models that celebrate and use the school's diversity to foster high expectations
- Develop a community which is vibrant, caring, creative, diverse, inspiring, welcoming, harmonious and aspirational
- Re-affirm consistently our belief that we should all treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves, and celebrate our common humanity
- Encourage students to understand their responsibilities as well as their rights, and support parents and carers in developing this understanding with their children
- Develop in all members of the community a willingness to celebrate the common elements of our multiple cultures and values rather than highlighting areas of conflict
- Actively encourage the appointment of staff at all levels who reflect the diversity of the school and wider local community

The Equal Opportunities Policy underpins and links to all other school policies, based on working systems which are embedded in school practice and procedure. The policy is also operated within a changing legislative position, and the school's duty clearly lies within that framework.

**Opportunity through Personalised Learning**

Personalised learning means meeting more needs of more students to a fuller extent than ever before. The aim of personalised learning is to ensure that all students access the curriculum in a variety of ways, in a range of learning styles and at an appropriate level for their individual needs. The school supports personalised learning through a range of strategies, for example, assessment for learning, differentiation within lesson planning, assessment and marking of class work and homework, target setting, students' involvement in their learning, and catering for the range of learning styles.

The use of data is key to the development of personalised learning. The school keeps a range of data on student progress, in order to ensure appropriate educational provision. Data sources include RAISE Online, currently working at levels/grades (CWAL/CWAG), KS2 outcomes, CAT scores, Fischer Family Trust (FFT) estimates, school-based analysis through SISRA, Sixth Form analyses such as ALPS, information on Learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), the Most Able lists, stage of English as an Additional Language (EAL), vulnerable students who are subject to a social care plan and attendance particularly persistent absentees. Staff may access the school-based data through SIMS so that they have a realistic picture of a student's potential matched against current progress.

As a result of a change in Government Policy and feedback from students, parents and staff, we have made the decision to move away from using the term 'Gifted & Talented' by replacing it with the term that Ofsted is currently using - **'Most Able Pupils'**. Lists of Sydenham's **'Highest Achieving Students'** are updated annually and are available for staff. These replace the previous 'Whole School G&T Registers' and represent the students that are currently achieving in the top 10-15% of their year group in their core subjects. The aim of these lists is to ensure that there is no discrimination in terms of identifying the most able students and to help the school to monitor our highest achieving students from an ethnic minority background and/or FSM status as part of our 'narrowing the gap' work.

The Inclusion Faculty incorporates specialist support for Learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), students with EAL and / or language acquisition needs and those with social or emotional difficulties. The Faculty conducts annual reviews for statemented students, updates the SEND register, ensures there is early identification and intervention for students with special needs and EAL students, develops IEPs and works with the school-based Attendance Officer and our Speech and Language Therapist. The Faculty staff access grant funding to ensure that the students' needs are met within available funding parameters. Appropriate agencies are used to support particular student needs, for example, child and family guidance counsellors, educational psychologists, CAMHS, and so on. The purpose of the Faculty is to support students to overcome learning inequality and social inequality, through appropriate school-based intervention.

### **Student Involvement**

In recent years, the involvement of students in their learning and in their school has significantly increased, as active partners rather than passive recipients. Students at Sydenham are actively involved in a variety of ways, for example:

- Year and School Councils and elections
- Involvement in presenting candidates and in elections for the Young Mayor of Lewisham
- Peer training and peer supporters
- Peer mediation
- Peer coaching
- Student Focus Groups to discuss specific issues and school policies
- Head Girl, the Student Leadership Team and the prefects
- Y8 student guides and student receptionists
- Junior Sports Leaders
- Student voice questionnaires
- School council and sub groups

Students on the School Council have direct access to the Headteacher, and representatives will meet with the Head to raise issues of importance to the students. Student Representatives of School Council also bring their views to the Governing Body on an annual basis. Issues requiring action are picked up by the Head, the teacher governors or other relevant staff. The School Council also has a budget at its disposal, and the students make the decision about how this will be spent. Students will also make decisions about supporting charities when they have raised money.

The challenge for the coming years is to ensure that the students engage with their learning and that the focus shifts to ensure that everything the school does promotes highly effective learning and enables the students to participate fully in their lifelong learning journey.

### **Student Behaviour and Discipline**

The school has policies on Good Behaviour and Anti-Bullying, and students are consulted about these policies. These policies exist so that all students are treated fairly, within an agreed framework in which clear boundaries are set. Rewards and merits are a key part of

the Good behaviour Policy and monitoring of equalities within that gives important information to staff about the spread of merits across the school.

Developments in behaviour for learning have become more prominent and the school works with a range of targeted groups to address underachievement, by removing barriers to learning, through early identification and direct intervention related to need.

Exclusions are monitored at Governing Body meetings, and are discussed at the Governors' Children, Young People and Families Committee. The Governors are aware that certain ethnic groups nationally are excluded more frequently than others and exclusions are monitored to ensure that trends can be identified and explained and action can be taken to address issues of concern.

It is expected that every person in the organisation will make a positive contribution to this policy, namely:

- All staff whether paid or voluntary and governors
- All visitors to and partners of Sydenham School
- All students at Sydenham School
- All parents at Sydenham School

In addition, Sydenham School will:

- Ensure that the services it provides are accessible to all and endeavour to positively encourage and benefit people from disadvantaged groups
- Supply specialist aids and facilities to enable disabled people
- Monitor any issues that arise within the organisation and take appropriate action, fully supporting any person in the organisation who is faced with prejudice or discrimination
- Undertake an annual evaluation process to ensure that the policy is clear, in keeping with current legislation and being adhered to
- Treat seriously any breaches of the policy, regarding them as misconduct which may lead to disciplinary proceedings

### **Recruitment of Staff and Equal Opportunities in Employment**

The Headteacher and Governors hold the responsibility for ensuring that equal opportunities legislation is correctly implemented in terms of staff appointments.

The school will apply fair selection criteria and all applicants for posts will be supplied with the same information, an opportunity to teach a class for applicants for teaching posts, and, subject to any shortlisting procedures, an interview. As far as possible, the lesson observation aspect of the interview process will involve similar classes, but there will be occasions when time and timetabling constraints will prevent this. All applicants for teaching posts will be given a specific lesson observation brief and class data, to enable them to prepare an appropriate lesson. For support staff who may work directly with children, e.g. Teaching Assistants, Learning Mentors, an appropriate group activity will usually be organised, which may involve students. For all appointments in-tray exercises, data analysis, other tests or presentations may also form part of the interview process where appropriate.

The interviewing panel will operate fair procedures by:

- Issuing appropriate selection criteria and information about the post
- Ensuring a welcoming environment as part of the interview
- Ensuring the interview process is fairly applied to all applicants, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, religion or disability
- Asking all applicants similar questions, within the context of DfE guidance on safer recruitment practice and ensure there is an appropriate Safeguarding question for every interview.
- Giving all applicants similar tasks, e.g. presentations or in-tray exercises

- Making notes during applicants' answers and allocating marks to allow for a moderation process
- Keeping interviews to time
- Moderating and discussing the interviews fairly at the end of the process
- Appointing the best person for the post by consensus of the interview panel, or reaching a joint decision on whether to re-advertise

This section of the policy should be cross referenced with the relevant section of the HR Policies **Staff**

### **CPD**

The school recognises that there will be a need to support the promotion of race, gender and disability equality. All staff should have an equal right to high quality training and development, and the school should be proactive in supporting the needs of groups who may be disadvantaged in terms of employment opportunities – for example, women into non-stereotypical leadership roles, black staff seeking opportunities in middle and senior leadership posts, or disabled staff seeking promotion.

Staff training in the use of data to support learning and to track progress is continuing and becoming more sophisticated. There is consistent monitoring of the progress of student groups at risk of underachievement by Curriculum Leaders, HoKS and Year Learning Co-ordinators and it is an expectation that these issues will be directly addressed in Faculty and Year teams.

Training needs for all staff will continue to be identified through the Performance Management Policy, the School Improvement Plan and in accordance with the CPD Policy and personal portfolios.

### **Admissions and Transfer**

Sydenham is a community school and follows the Common Admissions Policy administered by the Local Authority. Sydenham is an inclusive, comprehensive school and no students will be refused admission solely on the grounds of race, disability or level of disadvantage.

When students transfer to another school from Sydenham, relevant information will be passed to the receiving school in line with current requirements, including standard information regarding ethnicity, progress and achievement, disciplinary and exclusion history. When students transfer to Sydenham as casual admissions, interview information is recorded on a standard pro forma, so that consistent information is received, noting any particular need or disadvantage which the school can then address.

### **Ensuring Race, Class and Religious Equality**

#### **Context**

Sydenham School has a significant number of ethnic minority students and 71 languages are spoken by our students. Many of our students have at some time in their school career been on Free School Meals indicating the level of deprivation and low income that large numbers of our students face – economic status is a key indicator of class. The number of ethnic minority staff of Asian, African and African-Caribbean heritage has increased in recent years. In the majority of cases the needs of students and staff are catered for in the diverse daily life of the school. The EAL Leader meets the additional needs of students with English as an Additional Language (EAL). There are also rising numbers of students from the full range of the world religions and other minor religions – all are welcomed and represented in the Sydenham community.

#### **Aims**

In accordance with our values we aim to:

- Promote race, class and religious equality
- Promote good race, class and religious relations

- Eliminate any racial, class and religious discrimination

Sydenham School is committed to these goals. Our vision ensures that we all have the right and opportunity to reach our full potential. Our commitment at Sydenham School is to:

- Make Sydenham School an environment where everyone, irrespective of age (for employees not for service provision), disability, race, class, religion and belief, sex (including issues of transgender or gender reassignment), maternity and pregnancy, sexual orientation, marital status and Civil Partnership (for employees) feels welcomed and valued.
- Ensure that all students and staff are encouraged, and able to achieve their full potential.
- Respect and value differences between people.
- Prepare students for life in a diverse society.
- Acknowledge the existence of discrimination and take steps to prevent it.
- Promote good relations between different people and groups within Sydenham School and the wider community.
- Ensure that an inclusive ethos is established and maintained.
- Oppose all forms of prejudice and harassment on any grounds.
- Be pro-active in tackling and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- Headteacher, Leadership Team and Governing Body will have the responsibility to ensure the implementation of the Equality Policy
- Subject Leaders will ensure that teaching and learning in their Departments has a globally inclusive nature
- Year Learning Co-ordinators will ensure that the various cultural needs of our students are understood, communicated and met through the tutorial curriculum
- All teachers and staff have a duty to ensure that all of their students' academic and pastoral needs in school are met
- All parents will have the right to be consulted, informed and asked to participate in the life of the school
- All students will have the right to be consulted, informed and have the opportunity to participate in all school activities

### **Leadership and Management**

- Governing Body and the Leadership Team will set a clear ethos, which reflects Sydenham School's commitment to equality for all members of the school community.
- Leadership Team will work in partnership with others to promote equality of opportunity and oppose all forms of oppressive behaviour, prejudice and discrimination.
- Leadership Team will ensure that all staff contribute to the development and review of the Equality Policies. The school will ensure the involvement of governors and parents in the development of the Equality Policy.
- The Headteacher will ensure that the Equality Policy is reviewed annually and amended when necessary.
- The Leadership Team with Curriculum Leaders will ensure that Teaching and Curriculum development are monitored to ensure high expectations of all students and appropriate breadth of content in relation to the school and the wider community.
- All staff and governors will be given regular opportunities to train for the ongoing effective implementation of the Single Equalities Policy.

### **Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment**

Sydenham School is committed to delivering a global, inclusive curriculum, across all subjects, which challenges damaging stereotypes of any description and proactively celebrates societal and cultural diversity. This will include:

- Curriculum content which provides a global perspective
- Displays and signs around the school which celebrate diversity
- EAL Teaching to overcome barriers of language
- Use of resources and staff from a range of sources
- Use of positive role models (parents, governors and local contacts) from the community in the classroom, special talks and assemblies.
- Grouping students in classes according to ability and fairness

The policy will be monitored by the relevant members of the Leadership Team to ensure that all schemes of work reflect a globally inclusive curriculum, and that inclusive practice remains central in terms of equality.

### **Admission, Attendance, Discipline and Exclusions**

Sydenham School monitor admissions, attendance, discipline and exclusions by ethnicity to ensure that all processes are fairly applied to all ethnic groups by:

- Recording admissions, attendance and exclusions by ethnicity.
- Ensuring equality of treatment in relation to admission, attendance, discipline and exclusion.
- Ensuring that the school's behaviour policy is applied equally to all students.
- Working with external agencies to meet with the needs of all students, including Traveller Children and casual admissions.
- Ensuring that all staff operate a consistent system of rewards and punishments.

### **Students – Personal Development, Attainment and Progress**

The school will undertake certain actions to ensure that equality is a reality in students' personal development, attainment and progress:

- Students' GCSE results and post 16 results will be analysed and communicated to Subject Leaders and the Leadership Team to inform future planning
- Any underachievement by ethnic minority students will trigger specific and targeted action to improve attainment
- Students' personal development will be celebrated in class, in daily assemblies and end of year assemblies as well as displays around the school.
- The school will be culturally sensitive to the needs of students from an ethnic minority to ensure full participation in extra-curricular activities
- Additional out-of-hours clubs will be provided to overcome underachievement by identified ethnic groups.
- Careers guidance will be provided which challenges racial stereotypes and ensures that work placements are free from racial harassment

### **Attitudes and Environment (Inclusive Ethos)**

The school will build an inclusive ethos by:

- Opposing all forms of bullying, harassment, prejudice and discrimination
- Providing a safe learning environment and by tackling bullying or harassment in line with the LA and the school's Behaviour Policy; victims will be supported through the pastoral system and perpetrators helped to understand why their behaviour is unacceptable.
- Developing links with the local communities through welcoming contributions to the life of the school, attendance at Parents' Evenings and membership of the Governing Body
- Demonstrating through displays, assemblies, the pastoral and academic curriculum and the school newsletter and Sydenham Magazine that the school values diversity
- Enabling students and staff to celebrate religious festivals, feast days and actively encouraging all students to understand these through pastoral tutorial time, assemblies, RE and SMSC education

### **Parents, Governors and Community Partnership**

The school will encourage all parents and especially those who belong to ethnic minority groups or who suffer from disadvantage to become involved with the life of the school, formally as governors, at parents' evenings and on school trips by:

- Informing all parents on the progress of their child, if necessary in home language
- Proactively encouraging parents from an ethnic minority heritage or who suffer from disadvantage to attend Parents' Evenings - by letter and, if necessary, by phone or by visit
- Year team leaders collating, analysing and communicating data on parental attendance to inform future planning for Parents' Evening
- Informing the community, about how to become a governor. In addition, by speaking at community events
- Encouraging all communities to use the school's facilities for their leisure activities by advertising in the appropriate media

### **Recruitment, Training and Professional Development:**

The school will take active steps to employ a diverse workforce on the basis of merit and thereby provide positive role models for students by:

- Advertising new posts widely in all relevant media
- Actively targeting specific ethnic minorities which are under-represented in the school and employing on the basis of merit
- Ethnically monitoring the recruitment process for all vacancies (applications, short listings, appointments) to ensure that there is no ethnic bias
- Providing professional development opportunities to all staff, and encouraging ethnic minority staff to consider promotion on merit in line with statutory duties and LA guidelines
- Assessing each member of staff's competence in the area of equality through appraisal and ensuring that staff and governors are provided with sufficient training on equality to allow them to carry out their statutory duties
- Ensuring an induction programme for all staff on the Equalities Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy and ensuring that existing staff are made aware of the Policies

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Governing Body, the Leadership Team and all staff will review the Equalities Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy regularly to take account of any legal or demographic changes. Any changes and developments will be communicated to students, staff, governors and parents. Specific areas for monitoring will be:

**Progress on Equality Issues** – Senior Leadership Team through governing body committees and full meetings of the Governing Body.

**Appointments of Staff** – Headteacher, school-based Personnel Officer, nominated governor for personnel issues, to ensure fair practice and equity.

**Exam Results and Student Achievement** – Deputy and Assistant Heads, Examinations Officer, governors' Curriculum Committee, to monitor the achievement of potentially disadvantaged groups.

**Destinations** – Deputy and Assistant Heads, Federation Leader and Federation Head of Post-16, to ensure that the school's high aspirations for students are being met, and enabling students to access a wide variety of opportunities appropriate for their achievement when they leave school, supporting those who or who suffer from disadvantage to access grant funding.

**Work Experience** – Work Experience Co-ordinator will monitor placements to ensure health and safety, fair treatments of all students, and fair allocation of placements

**Racist Incidents** – Deputy Head, also responsible for reporting to Governing Body and Local Authority in line with requirements

**Referrals to Outside Agencies** – Assistant Head, Curriculum Leader SSLD

**Disciplinary incidents** – Year Learning Co-ordinators, with particular regard to any discrimination e.g. racist, sexist, or homophobic actions or comments, and behaviours which discriminate against disabled students

**Curriculum and Curriculum Access** – Deputy Head, Curriculum Leaders, Year Learning Co-ordinators to maximise the potential for achievement

**Exclusions** – Headteacher to ensure impartiality in decision making about exclusion as a sanction, Head to report at Governing Body meetings, Assistant Head to report analysis of

exclusions to Curriculum Committee to assess whether ethnic groups or other groups are unfairly represented in exclusion figures, Governors' Discipline Committee as required.

### **Responsibilities**

- The Governing Body and the Headteacher will ensure that the school complies with all relevant legislation.
- The Governing Body and Headteacher will ensure that statutory requirements relating to equality legislation, and related procedures and strategies, are implemented.
- The Headteacher will ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities relating to equality legislation

### **Roles of Staff in the School Community**

There is a wide range of staff to support students so that they may realise their potential and be encouraged to work and behave well. It is not possible to encapsulate an individual's or team's role in a few short sentences, in our school where everyone gives so much more than the basic requirements. The following, therefore, is guidance on main issues and is not exhaustive:

- **Senior and Extended Leadership Team** – responsible for the accurate collation of data, monitoring the effectiveness of the Equal Opportunities Policy including Race Equality, the Disability Equality Scheme and the Gender Equality Scheme
- **Year Learning Co-ordinators** – responsible for the ethos of the year group and for monitoring the academic achievement of the year and groups within the year, particularly those at risk of underachievement, targeting students where appropriate
- **Curriculum Leaders** – responsible for the analysis of data, appropriate schemes of work and oversight of targeting of students to ensure high achievement
- **Subject Teachers and Tutors** – must ensure that lessons are thoroughly planned and prepared, to develop the personalised learning agenda and maximise the achievement of all students. All students should be given the opportunity to contribute to lessons and particular groups should not be disadvantaged in any way.
- **Learning Mentors** – work with students experiencing barriers to learning and mediate between students where disharmony is affecting behaviour
- **Attendance and Welfare Officer** – leads the team of Attendance Checkers and supports not only student attendance, but also their health and well-being enabling them to access their educational opportunities
- **SSLD and SBS staff** – ensures SEND, G&T and children who are subject to a plan or looked after are appropriately supported so that they have full access to the curriculum and achieve in line or beyond their potential. Staff also work with students internally excluded from school for short periods of time, or who are withdrawn for support, or with students returning from long-term exclusion, to ensure that problematic behaviours are addressed and dealt with, so that students may successfully reintegrate to lessons
- **G&T Co-ordinator** – promotes high standards of provision for more-able students to ensure that these students excel. Within this, there will be the need to ensure that there is no bias towards a particular group, e.g. over-identification of white middle class students at the expense of ethnic minority students
- **EAL staff** – responsible for the planning, delivery and evaluation of the EAL Action Plan, integration of new students, and enabling EAL students not only to gain fluency in English in order to access the curriculum, but also to gain qualifications in their home language where appropriate
- **Support Staff/Lunchtime Supervisors** – responsible for the smooth running of lunchtime, and for the safety of students at that time
- **Premises Staff** – responsible for the look, physical safety and smooth running of the whole school environment
- **Support Staff i/c Display** – responsible for the regular changing of display and for ensuring that displays promote positive images of e.g. gender, race, disability

These are examples. The fact is that every member of staff will have a role in relation to equality of opportunity.

**Breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy** The following action will be taken if the Equal Opportunities Policy is not followed:

**For a student** – a meeting can be arranged with parents and suitable sanctions implemented as outlined in the school's Good Behaviour Policy e.g. written apology in racial harassment cases, withdrawing of privileges or other sanctions, as agreed in Good Behaviour Policy, Restorative Justice or mediation meetings.

**For a member of staff** – a discussion with Head/Chair of Governors followed by a verbal warning and then a written one.

**For Governors** – a discussion with Head/chair of Governors followed by a verbal and written warning.

**For the Head** – discussion with Chair of Governors and verbal warning, followed by a written one. Persistent breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy could result in disciplinary action. All staff and students will have the right of appeal, according to the school's and Local Authority's standard procedures.

### **Legislative Framework**

The legislation generally requires schools to avoid discrimination and to promote equality for students, staff and others who use the school's facilities. The law identifies different categories of discrimination, with different levels of legal framework surrounding them:

- Direct Discrimination – when someone is treated less favourably than others in comparable circumstances because of a specific characteristic e.g. gender, race or religion.
- Indirect Discrimination – when a provision or practice is applied equally to everyone, but might have a different impact on a particular group, who might then be placed at a disadvantage as a result
- Victimisation – in this context, treating a person less favourably because they have taken action in respect of discrimination
- Harassment – unwanted conduct or bullying which violates a person's dignity or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a particular group

Sydenham School is committed to positive action to promote the needs and interests of all groups of staff, students and the wider community. The school's Equal Opportunities Policy aims to address the various legislative requirements, and integrate them within the policy, rather than publish separate sets of policies.

### The key legislation is now one single Act - **The Equality Act 2010**

This is a law which protects people from discrimination. It replaces all previous, separate equality laws including the Disability Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act and many others. In this act the definition of Equality does not mean treating everyone the same, it means treating people fairly, with respect, having regard for their rights and wishes. Sometimes this means giving people extra help so they have the same chances.

Sydenham School will adhere to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by not discriminating against learners, staff, volunteers or anyone involved in external agencies the organisation may be working with on the grounds of:

The protected characteristic of 'Age' applies to schools as employers, but not with regard to the treatment of pupils or prospective pupils.

### **Equality Act 2010**

#### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

Previous equality duties involved schools producing separate policies and action plans for race, disability and gender. The new Equality Act introduces a single equality duty for all public sector organisations including schools, this is known as the 'public sector equality duty'.

The public sector duty requires all schools to show how they are meeting the aims of the Equality Act by giving 'due regard' to the need to:

- **Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- **Advance Equality of Opportunity**, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- **Foster Good Relations** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

#### **Specifically to:**

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that is connected to that characteristic
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that is different from the needs of persons who do not share it
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low

#### **Protected Characteristics**

The Equality Act protects the same groups of people that were covered by previous equality legislation, but these groups are now referred to as 'protected characteristics'.

The protected characteristic of 'Age' applies to schools as employers, but not with regard to the treatment of pupils or prospective pupils.

#### **What does this mean for school governing bodies?**

The Act covers all aspects of school life which are to do with how a school treats its pupils and prospective pupils, and their parents and carers; how it treats its employees; and how it treats members of the local community.

The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual accessing education provision. A school must not discriminate against a pupil

It is also unlawful for a school to harass or victimise a pupil.

#### **What do schools have to do?**

Schools and other public sector organisations have two sets of specific duties which they must achieve to show that they are meeting their duty, they must:

- Identify where there are gaps and prioritise these for actions identifying at least 3 measurable 'equality objectives' to focus on over the next 3 years
- Develop a 'Single Equality' Policy, detailing all protected characteristics, and making clear the school's responsibilities under the Act, its commitment and what it will do to achieve 'equality of opportunity' for the whole school community.

## **Policy – Complaints**

Sydenham School wishes to ensure that all complaints and grievances are resolved quickly and fairly.

The vast majority of concerns are dealt with immediately and satisfactorily at an informal stage. However, the school recognises that there may be occasions when a formal complaint will be warranted. Therefore, the complaints document sets out to provide an efficient and accessible complaints procedure with clear channels of communication.

The complaints procedure refers to general complaints and does not cover complaints about the following issues for which there are specific statutory regulations and LA appeal mechanisms:

- The LA decisions on special educational needs assessments and school placements
- School admissions and transfers
- Exclusions
- Employment