



Sydenham School Equal Opportunities Statement of Commitment

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 - gifted and talented, learners with difficulties or disabilities, 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 on homosexuality, or on moral issues such as 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 key to improvement, achievement and aspiration. We bring a range of different experiences, from which we can all benefit.

We believe in inclusion and inclusive practices, and fully support the "Every Child Matters" agenda. 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.