

Richard Pate School



Equal Opportunities Policy

Reviewed JMH/PH September '26

1. Policy Statement

At Richard Pate School (RPS), we believe that every child should feel safe, valued, respected and a true sense of belonging within our school community. Our aim is to nurture confident, kind and compassionate young people who value diversity, treat others with dignity and respect, and understand that everyone has a part to play in creating an inclusive community.

Our values of Respect, Prepared and Safe underpin everything we do. They guide the way we learn, work and live together, encouraging every member of our community to celebrate difference, show empathy, act with integrity and contribute positively to school life.

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that every pupil, member of staff, parent, trustee, volunteer, contractor and visitor is treated fairly and with respect. We welcome the richness that diversity brings to our school and are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels included, listened to and able to flourish.

Richard Pate School does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or prejudice-related behaviour. We are committed to identifying and removing barriers to participation and achievement so that every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential, regardless of age, disability, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or any other characteristic protected by law.

We recognise that equality, inclusion and safeguarding are intrinsically linked. In line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)*, we understand that children who experience discrimination, exclusion or prejudice may be more vulnerable to harm. All staff share a responsibility for creating a culture where pupils feel safe to be themselves, know that their voices will be heard and trust that concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon.

Through our curriculum, pastoral care and wider school life, we actively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance. We encourage our pupils to develop curiosity about the world, appreciation of different perspectives and cultures, and the confidence to challenge prejudice and discrimination in a respectful and thoughtful way.

This policy supports the School's commitment to meeting the Independent School Standards and reflects our determination to provide a learning environment in which every member of the Richard Pate community is able to thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

This policy applies to all aspects of school life, including:

- admissions;
- teaching, learning and curriculum provision;
- access to educational opportunities, trips, clubs and co-curricular activities;
- behaviour, rewards and sanctions;
- suspension, exclusion and required removal;
- safeguarding, pastoral care and pupil wellbeing;
- recruitment, employment and professional development;
- relationships with parents, trustees, volunteers, contractors and visitors;
- all school policies, procedures and decision-making.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- promote a culture of kindness, respect, inclusion and belonging throughout the Richard Pate School community;
- ensure equality of opportunity for all members of the School community;
- comply with the Equality Act 2010, the Independent School Standards and relevant statutory guidance;
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and prejudice-related behaviour;
- foster positive relationships built on mutual respect and understanding;
- ensure that every pupil feels safe, valued, listened to and included;
- remove barriers to participation, learning and achievement wherever possible;
- ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in leadership, decision-making and everyday practice;
- support pupils' wellbeing, personal development and preparation for life in modern Britain;
- encourage every member of the School community to contribute positively to a welcoming, respectful and inclusive culture.

3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has regard to:

- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Children Act 1989 and 2004;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- SEND Code of Practice (0–25 years);
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE 2026);
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children*;
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended);
- Department for Education guidance relating to the Independent School Standards;
- Prevent Duty Guidance;
- Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC;
- Guidance on Political Impartiality in Schools;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4. Protected Characteristics

Richard Pate School recognises and respects the diversity of every member of its community.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, we are committed to protecting individuals from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of the following protected characteristics:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin);
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

We are committed to ensuring that no individual is treated less favourably, disadvantaged or excluded because of a protected characteristic, because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, or because they are perceived to have one. We expect every member of the Richard Pate community to uphold these principles and to contribute to a culture where everyone is treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

5. Promoting Respect and Addressing Discrimination

At Richard Pate School, we expect every member of our community to treat others with kindness, dignity and respect. We are committed to creating an environment where diversity is celebrated, everyone feels they belong and discriminatory behaviour is never accepted.

The School will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or prejudice-related behaviour directed towards any individual or group. This includes behaviour related to any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, including race, disability, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, and age (where applicable).

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, unlawful conduct includes:

- **Direct discrimination** – treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.
- **Indirect discrimination** – applying a policy, practice or requirement that places people who share a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage without objective justification.
- **Harassment** – unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- **Victimisation** – treating someone unfairly because they have raised, supported or participated in a complaint relating to discrimination.

Prejudice-related language or behaviour, including bullying or discriminatory conduct, will always be challenged and addressed promptly. All incidents will be managed in accordance with the School's Behaviour, Anti-Bullying and Safeguarding Policies.

In line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)*, staff will consider whether any incident raises wider safeguarding concerns and will record, report and respond appropriately. The School's response will be proportionate to the age, developmental stage and understanding of the child involved, while making it clear that discriminatory language or

behaviour is unacceptable and providing opportunities for education, reflection and, where appropriate, restorative practice.

6. Admissions

Richard Pate School welcomes applications from children and families from a wide range of backgrounds and is committed to providing a fair, transparent and inclusive admissions process.

Admissions decisions are made in accordance with the School's published Admissions Policy and are based on whether the School can meet a child's educational needs and support them to participate fully in school life.

The School does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic.

Where appropriate, the School will consider reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, taking account of the individual needs of the child, the adjustments required and the resources available, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Throughout the admissions process, we work collaboratively with families to gain a clear understanding of each child's strengths, interests and needs, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the child and the wider school community.

7. Equality in Teaching, Learning and School Life

At Richard Pate School, we believe that every child should have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, develop confidence and resilience, and feel that they belong within our school community.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded throughout the curriculum, pastoral care and wider life of the School. We aim to ensure that every pupil experiences a learning environment where they are respected, encouraged and supported to succeed.

The School will:

- provide equitable access to learning, enrichment and leadership opportunities;
- maintain high expectations for every pupil;
- identify and reduce barriers to learning and participation wherever reasonably possible;
- promote positive relationships founded on kindness, respect and inclusion;
- celebrate diversity through the curriculum, assemblies, enrichment activities and everyday school life;
- ensure that pupils are treated fairly, consistently and with dignity.

Teaching and learning will:

- reflect a broad range of cultures, perspectives and lived experiences;
- encourage curiosity, empathy and respectful dialogue;
- challenge stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory attitudes in an age-appropriate manner;
- develop pupils' understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion;

- support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development;
- promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and respect for those with different faiths and beliefs.

Through positive relationships and effective role modelling, staff help pupils to develop respect for themselves and others, preparing them to contribute positively to life in modern Britain and beyond.

8. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Richard Pate School is committed to ensuring that pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are fully included in all aspects of school life and are supported to achieve their individual potential.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice, the School will make reasonable adjustments, where appropriate, to ensure that pupils with disabilities are not placed at a substantial disadvantage and are able to access education, facilities and the wider opportunities available at the School.

We recognise that equality does not always mean treating everyone in exactly the same way. Rather, it means recognising individual strengths and needs, removing barriers where possible and providing appropriate support so that every child has equitable opportunities to participate, learn and flourish.

The School works in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and external professionals to identify needs, plan appropriate provision and review progress regularly. Our aim is to ensure that every pupil feels valued, included and able to participate confidently in the academic, pastoral and co-curricular life of the School.

9. Safeguarding and Wellbeing

At Richard Pate School, we recognise that safeguarding and equality are closely connected. Every child has the right to feel safe, respected and included, and we understand that discrimination, prejudice, bullying or exclusion can have a significant impact on a child's wellbeing, mental health and sense of belonging.

In accordance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)*, all staff have a responsibility to remain vigilant to the ways in which prejudice-related behaviour or discrimination may indicate, contribute to or arise from wider safeguarding concerns.

Any incident involving discrimination, harassment, bullying or prejudice-related behaviour will be taken seriously, recorded appropriately and responded to promptly in line with the School's Safeguarding, Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies.

Where there are concerns that a child may be at risk of harm, or where discriminatory behaviour forms part of a wider pattern of concern, staff will consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay. Appropriate support will be provided for all pupils involved, recognising that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

10. Curriculum and Personal Development

At Richard Pate School, we believe that education extends beyond academic achievement. Through a broad and balanced curriculum, we encourage pupils to become kind, respectful and thoughtful young people who value diversity, act with integrity and contribute positively to their communities.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are woven throughout the curriculum and wider life of the School, supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and preparing them for life in modern Britain.

Through age-appropriate teaching and meaningful experiences, pupils are encouraged to develop:

- respect for themselves and others;
- empathy, kindness and compassion;
- an appreciation of different cultures, faiths, beliefs and perspectives;
- confidence to challenge prejudice and unfairness respectfully;
- resilience, integrity and a strong sense of social responsibility.

These themes are developed through:

- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education;
- assemblies and collective worship;
- pastoral programmes;
- curriculum subjects;
- educational visits and enrichment activities;
- opportunities for pupil leadership and service.

The School actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and respect for those with different faiths and beliefs.

In accordance with statutory guidance, teaching will be age-appropriate, balanced and objective. Where political or controversial issues are discussed, pupils will be supported to consider a balanced range of viewpoints, enabling them to think critically, form their own informed opinions and engage respectfully with others.

11. Staff Responsibilities

Every member of staff contributes to creating the inclusive, respectful and welcoming culture that defines Richard Pate School.

All staff are expected to:

- uphold the School's values of Respect, Prepared and Safe in their professional practice;
- model kindness, fairness and respectful relationships;
- foster a culture where every child feels safe, included and valued;
- promote equality, diversity and inclusion through everyday interactions and teaching;
- challenge discrimination, prejudice and inappropriate language promptly and appropriately;
- listen carefully to pupils and take concerns seriously;
- report and record concerns in accordance with the School's safeguarding procedures;
- work collaboratively with colleagues, parents and external agencies where appropriate to support pupils' wellbeing.

Staff recognise that every interaction with a pupil provides an opportunity to model empathy, respect and inclusion.

12. Leadership and Governance Responsibilities

The Headmaster, Senior Leadership Team and Trustees share responsibility for ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion remain central to the life of the School.

The Headmaster is responsible for:

- promoting a culture of inclusion, belonging and mutual respect;
- ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently across the School;
- ensuring that staff receive appropriate safeguarding, equality and inclusion training;
- responding appropriately to concerns, complaints and prejudice-related incidents;
- monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and ensuring that lessons learned inform future practice.

The Trustees are responsible for:

- ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the Independent School Standards and relevant statutory guidance;
- providing strategic oversight of equality, diversity and inclusion across the School;
- monitoring trends relating to safeguarding, behaviour and prejudice-related incidents through anonymised reporting;
- supporting a culture of continuous improvement that promotes pupils' wellbeing, safety and inclusion.

Together, School leaders and Trustees are committed to ensuring that equality is embedded within strategic planning, decision-making and the everyday life of Richard Pate School.

13. Raising Concerns and Complaints

Richard Pate School encourages pupils, parents, staff and members of the wider school community to raise concerns where they believe discrimination, harassment, victimisation or unequal treatment has occurred.

All concerns will be listened to carefully, investigated fairly and handled with sensitivity, confidentiality and respect.

Concerns will be managed in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedure and, where appropriate, may also be addressed through the Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Staff Disciplinary Procedures or Parent Contract.

No individual will be treated less favourably because they have raised a concern or supported another person in doing so.

The School is committed to learning from concerns and using them to strengthen our inclusive culture and improve practice.

14. Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement

Richard Pate School is committed to regularly reviewing its practice to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion remain integral to every aspect of school life.

The School will monitor, where appropriate:

- prejudice-related incidents;
- bullying and behavioural trends;
- safeguarding concerns linked to discrimination or exclusion;
- complaints relating to equality and inclusion;
- participation in academic, pastoral and co-curricular opportunities;
- admissions, attendance and other relevant data to identify potential barriers to inclusion.

Information gathered through monitoring will be used to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of this policy;
- inform staff training and professional development;
- strengthen pastoral support and safeguarding practice;
- enhance curriculum planning and personal development programmes;
- support strategic school improvement;
- promote a culture of inclusion, belonging and continuous reflection.

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Headmaster and Trustees to ensure that it remains compliant with current legislation, statutory guidance and the evolving needs of the Richard Pate School community.

15. Staff Training and Professional Development

Richard Pate School recognises that creating an inclusive, respectful and welcoming community depends upon knowledgeable, confident and reflective staff. High-quality professional development is therefore central to promoting equality, safeguarding pupils and ensuring that all members of our community can flourish.

All staff will receive appropriate induction and ongoing training that is proportionate to their role and responsibilities. Training will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it reflects current legislation, statutory guidance and emerging best practice.

Professional development may include:

- equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging;
- safeguarding and child protection;
- recognising and responding to prejudice-related behaviour;
- discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- unconscious bias and inclusive practice;
- cultural awareness and respectful communication;
- neurodiversity, including understanding and supporting pupils with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other neurodevelopmental differences;
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);
- recording, reporting and responding to safeguarding and equality concerns.

Staff are expected to engage positively with professional learning and to apply this knowledge in their everyday practice, ensuring that every pupil experiences an environment where they feel safe, respected, included and supported to achieve their potential.

16. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following School policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Diversity, Anti-Racism, Inclusion and Respect Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Admissions Policy;
- Exclusion and Required Removal Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Complaints Procedure;
- Online Safety Policy;
- Recruitment and Selection Policy;
- Parent Contract.

Together, these policies support the School's commitment to safeguarding, promoting equality of opportunity, fostering positive relationships and ensuring that every member of the Richard Pate School community is treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

17. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The Headmaster has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively and remains consistent with the School's ethos, values and statutory responsibilities.

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Headmaster and Trustees, or sooner if required by changes to legislation, statutory guidance or the needs of the School.

The review will take account of:

- developments in equality legislation and case law;
- updates to *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* and other safeguarding guidance;
- changes to the Independent School Standards and ISI Framework;
- Department for Education guidance and best practice;
- feedback from pupils, parents, staff and Trustees where appropriate;
- monitoring of prejudice-related incidents, safeguarding concerns and complaints;
- the effectiveness of staff training and professional development;
- the School's ongoing work to promote equality, diversity, inclusion, belonging and respect.

Through regular review and reflection, Richard Pate School seeks to ensure that this policy remains a living document which supports our vision of a school where every child is known, valued and encouraged to flourish, and where our values of Respect, Prepared and Safe are evident in all aspects of school life.