



# Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

## **This policy applies to:**

All Ardingly College Family of Schools Staff (Ardingly College, Great Walstead School, Ardingly College Projects Ltd and Ardingly Activity Centre)

## **Person responsible for the policy:**

HR Director and Head of EDI

## **Review Dates:**

Last Review September 2025

Next Review Sept 2026

## Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

1. As a values-driven and people-centred employer we commit to developing and maintaining a culture of care and inclusion; ensuring that this culture is embedded in all our activities, policies, and decisions.
2. We see our diverse population of both pupils and staff as one of our greatest strengths and we recognise that providing equity, valuing diversity, and promoting a culture of inclusion and psychological safety are vital to our success.
3. Our Vision is for Ardingly College Family of Schools to be a place where:
  - We have a shared purpose and strong values, to which we are all aligned, to which we are all held, and which show up in all that we do.
  - We are a strong, open, and inclusive community, where everyone can be their authentic selves, feel cared about and safe. We treat each other with kindness, act with integrity, live our values, speak up to hold one another to account and tackle poor behaviour if it arises.
  - We value and celebrate diversity and are respectful and keen to learn from others lived experiences and celebrate these through the year in testimonials at our EDI events and elsewhere. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are at the core of everything we think, say, and do.

## Purpose and aims

4. The purpose of this policy is to set out our approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion and how we will create a safe and inclusive organisation that learns and grows to proactively dismantle barriers, eliminate discrimination, and create equity for our people and those we serve.
5. This policy aims to ensure we:
  - Treat everyone with dignity, fairness and respect and recognise individual uniqueness and identity. Taking into account, but not being limited by, any protected characteristic, combination of protected characteristics, or any other characteristic(s), socio-economic or demographic factors and/or cultural traits that may expose them to unfair disadvantage.
  - Create a culture of care, where we are compassionate and recognise the impact of different life phases and circumstances and seek to proactively provide support where we can.
  - Challenge all forms of unequal, offensive, and unlawful treatment.
  - Have the leadership, effective management practices and resources in place so that everyone understands the barriers to EDI and the consequences of discrimination, and that staff and students are encouraged to engage in honest and respectful conversations, and to reject 'bystander behaviour.' These expectations are set out in our **Behaviour Policy for Students** and our **Code of Conduct** for staff.
  - Develop a culture which attracts and retains people from the widest possible range of backgrounds and experiences into all levels of the organisation and create a positive experience for all.
  - Amplify, value and act upon the voice of lived experience.
6. Ardingly College Family of Schools is wholly committed to the principles of fairness, consistency, and equity. We believe that everyone has a right to equal access to employment and to be free of any direct or indirect discrimination and harassment or bullying. To achieve

this, Ardingly College Family of Schools and those engaged in our work with us will treat all people it deals with as individuals, in ways that are fair, consistent, and tailored to their needs yet aligned to Ardingly College Family of Schools' needs and objectives.

7. Ardingly College Family of Schools will strive to ensure that barriers are removed that may disproportionately disadvantage those with a 'protected characteristic' to ensure equality of choice and access. The characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010 are:
  - age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment including identity and expression
  - marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)
  - pregnancy and maternity
  - race
  - religion or belief
  - sex
  - sexual orientation

## Scope

8. This Policy provides guidelines and procedures for all Ardingly College Family of Schools employees and will apply to all conditions of service including, but not limited to, recruitment and selection, training, promotion, conditions of employment, remuneration, social and recreational activities, and termination of employment.
9. This policy applies to all Ardingly College Family of Schools employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time, to job applicants and to individuals such as agency staff, consultants, contractors, Governors, and volunteers, students, visitors, suppliers, and anyone engaged in business with the Ardingly College Family of Schools.

## What do we mean by Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?

10. **Equity** - Whilst **equality** means treating everyone the same regardless of their experiences, background or identity, **equity** recognises that people may have different advantages and barriers in society, and that we do not all have the same starting point. It is the ongoing process of acknowledging that inequality and taking steps to correct that imbalance.
11. **Diversity** - Diversity is anything that makes us different to each other and is something to be celebrated which adds richness to our community.
12. **Inclusion** - Inclusion is actively embracing people with diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Inclusion can be felt, but can also be seen through systems, processes, policies, and behaviours.

## Responsibilities

13. Under the Equality Act 2010, Ardingly College Family of Schools is legally responsible for all employees acting on behalf of Ardingly College Family of Schools. All employees must:
  - treat everyone with dignity and respect the rights and beliefs of others
  - anticipate and respond positively to the diverse needs and circumstances of others
  - not make assumptions about others

- challenge or report incidents of discrimination and harassment
  - act in ways that are in accordance with equality legislation
  - support the aims and values of Ardingly College Family of Schools in relation to equity, diversity, and inclusion objectives
14. All managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviour and lead by example through their actions and decision making, relating to their team members. Additionally, they must ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion.
15. Members of staff should be aware that in certain circumstances should they be guilty of discrimination they may be personally legally liable for their actions.

## Standards

16. We will:
- Promote equity, dignity, fairness, inclusion, and respect for all those who work for and have dealings with Ardingly College Family of Schools. Recognising that different viewpoints and cultural perspectives can exist in a respectful and inclusive space whilst also upholding the values of Ardingly College Family of Schools.
  - Create a culture that is free from prejudice, bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination, and offensive behaviour. By educating our people on their responsibilities to champion EDI, promoting inclusive language, and respectful behaviour, and ensuring any breaches are appropriately dealt with.
  - Provide support and take complaints of discrimination, unequal, unlawful, or offensive treatment seriously. Including, ensuring those who witness, or experience it know how, and where, to make complaints and seek support.
  - Proactively uphold and advance the rights of individuals belonging to the legally recognised characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as well as those who may experience discrimination and marginalisation outside the Act's scope, e.g. socio-economic status.
  - Consult and engage with our people to enhance our understanding of the needs of, and obstacles faced by, those from marginalised groups including through engagement surveys and diversity networks.
  - Ensure that our recruitment, selection, development, and progression processes are transparent, merit based, fair and accessible to all and remove barriers to progression.
  - Make jobs at all levels accessible, available on a flexible basis where possible, and proactively make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of our people.

## Application

17. Ardingly College Family of Schools will take a zero-tolerance stance towards acts of direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation of anyone engaged in their business in relation to the protected characteristics as well as those who may experience discrimination and marginalisation outside the Act's scope. Any instances of non-application of this policy will be thoroughly investigated, and where evidence is found of an individual's non-application of this policy, they may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the **Disciplinary Policy**, up to and including summary dismissal as a result of gross misconduct. Malicious or frivolous allegations will also be considered a disciplinary matter.

18. Any breach of this policy by our people will be promptly investigated through our ***Dignity at Work policy***.
19. No one will be victimised for taking this action and their complaint will be dealt with seriously, in confidence and as soon as possible.

### **Forms of discrimination**

20. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

#### *Direct discrimination:*

21. Direct discrimination occurs where:

- Someone is treated less favourably because of one or more Protected Characteristics. For example, rejecting an applicant because they would not "fit in" because of their race or sexual orientation would be direct discrimination.
- Someone is less favourably treated because of their association with someone who has a Protected Characteristic. For example, an employee may be treated less favourably because they have a disabled child.
- Someone is treated less favourably because they are perceived to have a Protected Characteristic. For example, an employee may be treated less favourably because they are believed not to be heterosexual.

#### *Indirect discrimination:*

22. Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to a provision, criterion, or practice, applied to a group of people, which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of a Protected Characteristic, and it cannot be objectively justified. An example might be a minimum height requirement for a job. This is likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If this criterion cannot be objectively justified because it is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, then it will be indirectly discriminatory on the ground of sex.

#### *Victimisation and harassment:*

23. Discrimination also includes victimisation (suffering a detriment because of action the employee has taken or may take to assert legal rights against discrimination or to assist a colleague in that regard (called a **Protected Act**) and harassment (see the ***Dignity at Work Policy*** for a more detailed explanation of "harassment").

### **Monitoring**

24. We will collect and monitor diversity-related data to better understand the experiences of our people and identify and remove barriers and ensure our policy and strategies are working effectively.

### **Related Policies**

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Capability Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Behaviour Policy for Students

