SUTTON VALENCE SCHOOL
SINCE 1576

Pupils' Equal Opportunities Policy

(Prep School and Senior School)

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This Policy applies to Sutton Valence School (including as the context requires, the Nursery, the Prep School and the Senior School).

Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy embraces the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Child Protection Policy, the Learning Support Policy, the Behaviour Policy and the SEND Policy of Sutton Valence School. It has been reviewed following the publication in June 2021 of the new DfE non-statutory guidance, 'Gender Separation in Mixed Schools'.

This policy sets out to support the aims of Sutton Valence School by allowing all pupils to achieve their individual best and for each member of the community to be treated equally and thereby to flourish. This policy should be read in conjunction with the 'Guidelines to Life at Sutton Valence School' a copy of which is available in the portal, the Parents' Handbook and in the Termly Calendar.

The School is a Christian foundation that welcomes the contributions that members of all denominations and faiths make to the whole community. The Governors and all staff are committed to meeting the specific needs of each pupil and acknowledge and value all linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. This reflects our ethos of a holistic education for life, valuing a broad range of learners.

It embodies our ethos of learning to set high expectations and placing equal emphasis on individual qualities such as leadership, service, compassion and making a difference to the community.

It also focuses on the development of international understanding, cultural difference and global citizenship with the spirit of valuing and respecting difference.

We value all pupils equally and aim to provide a safe and inclusive environment in which all can achieve their full potential, regardless of race, ethnicity, colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. We regard it as unacceptable to discriminate against anyone on these grounds.

This philosophy is in particular applied with regard to the following specific areas:

1. Admissions: The School admissions criteria are objective and are consistently applied. They focus on the prospective pupils' academic and all-round potential and their school record. Race, gender and disability are not part of the criteria applied;

2. Discipline: Any pupil, or group of pupils, who discriminates against or harasses any other pupil or member of staff, either verbally, by action or otherwise, on unacceptable grounds, will be subject to the disciplinary procedures of the School. Such behaviour will result in the School's Sanctions Policy being applied.

Harassment and other difficulties

In line with the Complaints Policy, any pupil or their parent on their behalf who feels that they have been singled out for unfair treatment or otherwise harassed on unacceptable grounds should raise the matter with their Housemaster or Housemistress or other senior member of staff.

Any such report will be fully investigated by the Housemaster or Housemistress or other senior member of staff and, if it appears that unacceptable discrimination or harassment of any type has occurred, the Head of Senior School and Headmaster will be informed and disciplinary measures will be taken.

All members of staff are aware of, and sensitive to, issues of discrimination and will, at all appropriate times, promote awareness of the negative aspects of stereotyping and the development of unacceptable discriminatory attitudes.

The School adopts a zero tolerance approach to peer-on-peer abuse. The School strives to ensure that no victim is ever made to feel ashamed.

Gender Separation

As a coeducational School, we have carried out a gender separation assessment, as below. This enabled us to establish that there were no issues with regards to academic or co-curricular opportunities. Where there were examples of gender separation these fell into the "Relevant lawful exceptions" category. They are:

- Some PSHE lessons are delivered into groups organised by gender;
- The girls and boys do have different choices with regards to their sporting options;
- Separate toilet and washing facilities are provided in keeping with regulation four of the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 for pupils over eight years and Schedule 22 of the Equality Act 2010);
- Separate boarding accommodation is provided for all pupils. Much is done to ensure that the same standard of accommodation is provided for both boys and girls.

Gender Separation Assessment

In making this assessment we have followed these guidelines:

1. Rationale for Gender Separation: Explaining the reasons behind any separation and how it aligns with the School's educational goals;

2. Monitoring and Review Processes: Outlining how the School ensures that gender-separated activities are fair and equitable;

3. Commitment to Equality: Detailing ongoing efforts to reduce unnecessary gender separation and promote gender-neutral policies

In 2023 Sutton Valence School celebrated 40 years of co-education. Over time our provision has evolved to ensure that where possible and appropriate, the School offers all pupils equal access to its educational provision and facilities. Thus, for example the CCF has regularly seen female pupils holding some of the top ranks in Corps.

Beyond washing and toilet facilities, other areas where our pupils are separated by gender. These include:

- In our PSHE/RSE lessons, we strive to provide all pupils with the same information, regardless of their gender identity. For example, puberty education is delivered to everyone together, but

separate Q&A sessions are provided in gender-segregated groups based on feedback from pupil voice, which indicated that some pupils would feel more comfortable asking questions in this;

- Sporting offer – Hockey, Cricket, Shooting, Swimming, Tennis and Athletics are offered to all pupils. Hockey is delivered on a gender separated basis to reflect available fixtures etc but there are times when our best players train together and/or where appropriate help to coach younger pupils of different genders. Constraints associated with safety, access to facilities and staffing mean that in the Lent Term only the girls have access to Netball whilst some of the boys play Football. This is something we continue to monitor as Football becomes part of Prep School provision for girls;

- Sporting facilities – Each year, we allocate specific times for female pupils to access the Cardio and Strength and Conditioning (S&C) facilities. This scheduling is based on feedback from pupil voice, which revealed that many girls feel they would be more likely to exercise frequently if they had the option to use these facilities in a female-only environment;

- Uniform – Significant progress has been made by the TIDE (Team for Inclusion, Diversity and Equality) Committee to ensure that our Dress Code is gender-neutral, allowing all pupils the choice to choose attire that aligns with their identity and comfort while maintaining a cohesive School appearance.

Safeguarding statement

Sutton Valence School is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all pupils and to all aspects of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils.

Equal Opportunities statement

The aims of the School and the principles of excellent pastoral care will be applied to all children irrespective of differences in ethnic background, culture, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender and disabilities, so long as in the last matter the pupil is able to involve himself or herself in the activity concerned; equally these differences will be recognised and respected, and the School will aim to provide a positive culture of tolerance, equality and mutual respect.

TIDE Committee (Team for Inclusion, Diversity and Equality)

From September 2022, the Assistant Head (Wellbeing), who also oversees our Wellbeing provision, has taken responsibility for this initiative that provides pupils with both a voice and leadership opportunities. Recent updates to our uniform guidelines reflect the feedback from this group, including the removal of gendered language, a proposal from the Team for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality (TIDE). The TIDE team aims to raise awareness of inclusion, diversity, and equality, which led to the introduction of our TIDE committee fair. This annual event focuses on increasing respect for differences within our community.

In this way, the School will continue to look to be proud of its community where “each cares for all and individuality is cherished”.

Transgender specific considerations

We recognise that the journey of understanding and expressing one’s gender identity is unique to each pupil. There is no definitive point at which a pupil will become a transgender person. However, when a pupil expresses a preference or asks to be referred to by a different name or pronoun, this will be a trigger for the School to provide tailored support in accordance with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

The level of support provided will therefore need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, considering issues such as:

1. The pupil's preferences and presentation: we will respect and support each pupil's choices regarding their gender identity and expression;

2. Their communications about this e.g.to family/peers;

3. How long the pupil considers they are or have been transgender;

4. Whether or not they are receiving treatment;

5. Whether welfare plans are in place;

6. Guidance from children's social care (CSC) if anyone at the School has concerns about the pupil's welfare or considers them at risk of harm.

Risk assessment and monitoring

The School safeguards and promotes the welfare of all pupils through its assessment and management of risks, including risks arising from the examples of gender separation listed above. The risk assessment is reflected in the Gender Separation Assessment. This includes risks of unintended consequences arising from the gender separation, and details of action taken to mitigate potential negative impacts such as the effect on pupils' chances to develop into socially confident individuals with their peers of the opposite gender.