



St. Francis' College ***Equal Opportunities Policy***

Introduction

The 'College' refers to all the staff and pupils of the Prep department and Senior School which includes Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS), Pre-prep (Key Stage 1), Prep (Key Stage 2), and Senior School (Key Stages 3-5).

St. Francis' College is an independent selective, day and boarding school of approximately 400 pupils between the ages of 3 and 18 years.

St Francis' College is mindful of its own stated aims and objectives and of its legal obligations under current equal opportunities legislation (the Equality Act 2010). Additionally, ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils is an important aspect of the College's Ethos and as a school with a Christian religious character.

Equal Opportunities

The aim is to enable each pupil who enters the College to fulfil her potential, to value others and be valued as an individual, to be able to celebrate difference and recognise similarity and to have a sense of self-worth and dignity.

Admissions procedures at St Francis' College are applied to pupils irrespective of an individual's race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, to determine fairly that a pupil is likely to benefit from the type of education offered at the College. St Francis' is an academically selective school and admission is dependent on meeting its entrance requirements. Where there is competition for places, admission is determined by merit, although for entry into the Senior School preference will be given to pupils in the College's Preparatory Department, siblings, and then to external candidates according to overall attainment and date of registration with the College.

The College strives to provide a caring, informed and secure environment and recognises the richness a diversity of cultures, traditions, national backgrounds and religions brings to the College and to those within it, and encourages respect, responsibility and interest in the College community members' dealings with each other.

The College seeks to ensure provision of equality of opportunity consistent with the safety of pupils or their families. Occasions where apparent differences in the way pupils have been treated may be appropriate because of issues such as age, or on medical grounds. The College Rules and Procedures are applied to all pupils as are its Behaviour and Discipline and Anti-Bullying Policies.

St Francis' College is a girls only school and, within the general exceptions of the Equality Act, is able to refuse to admit boys.

In strategic planning, in the admission of pupils, in the provision of curriculum and extra curriculum entitlement and in its day-to-day working, the College seeks to ensure equality of opportunity and equality of treatment for all pupils including the specific areas listed below as follows:

a) Race or National Background

Equality of opportunity and provision will be assured for all pupils regardless of their racial or cultural or national background. Racist abuse of pupils or discrimination against pupils on this basis is a serious College offence which will attract due investigation and, if appropriate, disciplinary sanctions. The College seeks to be understanding of the requirements of pupils from different racial, religious and cultural backgrounds and positively encourages pupils to share these with the rest of the College and to be proud of them.

In its teaching in general and in its Individual Needs provision, the College will be mindful of linguistic and cultural difficulties which pupils may encounter in the school environment. However, in order to cope with the high academic and social demands of the College, pupils must be good English speakers. Pupils whose first language is not English should have received English language education before coming to the College and are admitted for a one-year probationary period. Tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) will be arranged as an Extra at parents' expense. Entry to the Sixth Form requires a standard of English equivalent to a minimum overall IELTS score of 5.5.

b) Disability

The College seeks to ensure equality of opportunity and provision for all pupils regardless of any physical or mental disability so long as the College is sure, when a pupil is considered for admission, that she is able to benefit fully from the College's facilities and the type of education which is offered at St Francis' College and that resources will be made available or adapted by the College according to the needs of any girl with a disability within what may be deemed reasonable. Individual support is provided by the Individual Needs staff, including support for girls with Statements of Individual Needs.

c) Religion

The College does not select for entry on the basis of religious belief, and pupils of all faiths, or none, are welcomed. The College ensure equality of opportunity and provision for all pupils irrespective of their religious background and regardless of whether their family practises a faith or not. However, as a school designated to have a Christian religious character, all pupils are required to attend College religious services and Religious Studies lessons as determined by the Governors and Headmistress. It is always accepted that pupils attending these parts of College life in this way have full respect paid to the beliefs and practices of the pupils themselves and their families.

Parents should be aware that all pupils at St Francis’ College are required to wear a uniform until the Lower Sixth, and that a strict “business dress” code operates for the Lower and Upper Sixth. The Headmistress will consider written requests from parents for variations in the uniform on religious grounds that are consistent with the College’s Ethos and its policy on health and safety. The Headmistress may take expert advice, and will normally arrange to meet with the parents to discuss the implications of such a request.

d) Financial Circumstances

St Francis’ College is an independent fee paying school and as such parents, guardians or other persons responsible for the payment of fees for a pupil are responsible for ensuring the payment of all fees and extras punctually as the Headmistress, Bursar and Governors may determine. Subject to this condition, the College shall endeavour to ensure, for all pupils attending the College, equality of opportunity and provision regardless of the social or financial circumstances of their families. A limited number of Bursaries are available and, when funds permit, awards are made on a parental means tested basis. Scholarships are awarded on pupils’ merit.

Parental Concerns

St Francis’ College hopes that there will be no complaints about the operation of its Equal Opportunities Policy, but the College recognises the right of pupils or their families to express concern where they feel that this may not be the case.

The normal mechanisms of raising concern by way of Form Tutors, Heads of Year, or the Deputy Head may be used, as detailed in the College’s Complaints Procedure, a copy of which can be provided on request and is available on the College website.

Related Policies

- Admissions Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Disability Policy
- Individual Needs EAL Policy
- Health and Safety Guide
- Complaints Policy

Reviewed By	B Goulding
Effective From	September 2016
Next Review Due	September 2018

Notes For Information - Not Forming Part Of The Policy

From 1 October, the Equality Act 2010 replaced all existing equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act.

The new Act provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It simplifies the law by removing anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time in the existing legislation, and it extends the protection from discrimination in certain areas.

As far as schools are concerned, for the most part, the effect of the new law is the same as it has been in the past – meaning that schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Protection is now extended to pupils who are pregnant or undergoing gender reassignment. However, schools that are already complying with the law should not find major differences in what they need to do.

The exceptions to the discrimination provisions for schools that existed under previous legislation – such as the content of the curriculum, collective worship and admissions to single-sex schools and those of a religious character, are all replicated in the new Act.

However, there are some changes that have an impact on schools as follows:

- It is now unlawful to discriminate against a transsexual pupil.
- It is now unlawful to discriminate against a pupil who is pregnant or has recently had a baby.
- New Positive Action provisions will allow schools to target measures that are designed to alleviate disadvantages experienced by, or to meet the particular needs of, pupils with particular protected characteristics. Such measures will need to be a proportionate way of achieving the relevant aim.
- Extending the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils.

Notes On College Procedures On Tackling Racism - Not Forming Part Of The Policy

Staff awareness of racism is heightened through discussion and through their support of those in their care in form or lesson. Regular pastoral meetings are held where individual pupils are discussed by Subject, Form Boarding, Individual needs, EAL and Senior Staff. Such support falls within the Teachers' Standards in England; Part Two – Personal and professional conduct.

Staff and pupils are encouraged at every opportunity to learn about the differing groups represented in the College and to see any form of racism as unacceptable. This may be through assemblies (often through visiting speakers), Religious Studies and other lessons, the College Library, parent and guardian contacts, local groups and staff inset where possible. Boarding House staff especially are encouraged to learn as much as possible about the cultural background of their charges.

The College promotes good relations between different ethnic and cultural groups and encourages pupil friendships between these by a suitable mixing of groups in academic, practical and sports lessons and clubs, whilst at the same time recognising the need for the security and comfort of friendship groups of those with a similar background and, perhaps, language.

The College Library assists with race awareness by stocking books about other cultures, some of which are in other languages. The internet is a rich source of information about other cultures.

In the case of highlighting others' cultural backgrounds, we are always aware of a need for sensitivity in order that the girls concerned are not embarrassed by the information being made public.

As detailed in its Anti-Bullying and Behaviour and Discipline Policies, the College is opposed to all forms of racism and xenophobia, including those forms that are directed towards religious groups and communities. College responses may include sanctions, ranging from discussion with the Headmistress or her Deputy, to an acknowledgement by the pupil to others, to empathetic creative work or reading, to staff supervision at break times when incidents could easily occur, to a signed contract, to suspension or, ultimately, exclusion. It is incumbent on staff to report immediately to the Headmistress or her Deputy an instance of perceived racist behaviour. Any staff found to be discriminating racially would be severely dealt with according to the staff disciplinary procedures.