

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Last Reviewed/Updated: 15.10.2016

Next Review/Update: 15.10.2017

1. Introduction and Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 replaced existing equality legislation, including the Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Sex Discrimination Act and we welcome our duties under the Equality Act to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in relation to age (as appropriate), disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and sexual identity. Regent College also recognises the duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote community cohesion.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

2. Guiding Principles

The Equality Act 2010 has brought together all the current discrimination laws into one and sets out the protected characteristics that qualify for protection from discrimination as:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender including reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

In fulfilling the legal obligations cited above, we will be guided by nine basic principles.

2.1 All students and college team members are of equal value.

We see all students, their parents and carers, and college team members as of equal value:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and gender identity
- whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background
- whatever their sexual identity

2.2 We recognise and respect difference

Treating people equally (Axiom 1 above) does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate but must

nevertheless take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

- disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made (see also Access Policy / Plan)
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised and proactively addressed
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of girls and boys, and women and men, are recognised
- religion, belief or faith background
- sexual identity

2.3 Fostering positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion

Our approach, procedures and activities will promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non-disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents
- mutual respect and good relations between boys and girls, and women and men, and an absence of sexual and homophobic harassment

2.4 Observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development

We will always ensure that policies and procedures can benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and sexual identity, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity

2.5 Reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist.

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we will take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- girls and boys, women and men

2.6 Consult and involve widely

We will engage with a range of groups and individuals to ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones. We will consult in ways, which take into account:

ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised

disabled people as well as non-disabled

- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of girls and boys, and women and men, are recognised
- religion, belief or faith background
- sexual identity

2.7 Society as a whole should benefit

Our policies and activities will benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in public life of:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled
- people of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- both women and men, girls and boys
- all people regardless of sexual orientation

2.8 Base our practices on sound evidence

We will maintain and publish quantitative and qualitative information about our progress towards greater equality in relation to:

- disability
- ethnicity, religion and culture
- gender
- age
- sexual orientation

2.9 Objectives and reporting

We will formulate and publish specific and measurable objectives, based on the evidence we have collected and published and the engagement in which we have been involved, in relation to:

- disability
- ethnicity, religion and culture
- gender
- age
- sexual orientation

We will set out within the framework of the overall college improvement plan and processes the specific equality objectives we shall pursue. The objectives, which we identify, will take into account national and local priorities and issues, as appropriate. Our equality objectives will be kept under review and we will report annually on progress towards achieving them.

3. Curriculum

The college leadership team will keep each curriculum subject or area under review in order to ensure that teaching and learning reflect the principles set out above.

4. Ethos and Organisation

We will ensure that the axioms listed above apply to the full range of our policies and practices, including those that are concerned with:

- students' progress, attainment and achievement
- students' personal development, welfare and well-being
- teaching styles and strategies
- admissions and attendance
- staff recruitment, retention and professional development
- care, guidance and support
- behaviour, discipline and exclusions
- working in partnership with parents, carers and guardians
- working with the wider community

5. Prejudice and Bullying

Regent College is opposed to all forms of prejudice which stand in the way of fulfilling the legal duties referred to above:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- prejudices around racism and xenophobia, including those that are directed towards religious groups and communities, for example anti-Semitism, and those that are directed against travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum
- prejudices reflecting sexism and homophobia

6. Recruitment

We recognise our duties under safeguarding legislation and aim to comply with both the Health Standards (England) Regulations 2003 and Section 60 of the Equality Act 2010. We also note and will use guidance on Safer Recruitment (2007). Vacancies will be advertised openly and will normally be available for members of staff in the college to apply. In most cases vacancies will be advertised externally unless there are cogent reasons why this should not occur, for example in situations of potential redundancy.

Advisory Board members will wherever possible make reasonable adjustments to recruitment processes, working conditions or the working environment. All decisions relating to appointments or promotions will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. See 'Appointments and Safer Recruitment Policy'.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The Advisory Board is responsible for ensuring that the college complies with statutory requirements, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented. At all times a nominated member of the governing body will have a watching brief regarding the implementation of this policy. The Co-Principals is responsible for implementing the policy, for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination. The Co-Principals may delegate day-to-day responsibility to a member of the SLT.

Staff will be expected to:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- deal with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
- plan and deliver lessons and sequences of lessons reflecting the above axioms
- support students in their class for whom English is an additional language (see EAL Policy)
- keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work

8. Information and Resources

We will ensure that the content of this policy is known to all staff and governors and, as appropriate, to all students and their parents and carers.

9. Religious Observance

We will respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, students and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice. However all requests will be made dependent upon exigencies of the service and on the impact it would have on other staff and students at the college. Religious observance may not be granted on full pay and may be granted as unpaid leave.

10. Staff Development and Training

All staff, including support and administrative staff, will receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams. The principles outlined in relation to fair and equal treatment will also apply to selection for training. Requests for training will be considered in accordance with Regent College's operational priorities, based on the college development plan and CPD budget.

11. Breaches of the Policy

Any breaches of this policy will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of other college policies are dealt with, as determined by the Principal and governing body.

12. Impact Monitoring and Evaluation

Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected relating to the implementation of this policy, and Advisory Board members may make adjustments as appropriate in the light of such review. In particular we collect, analyse and use data in relation to achievement, broken down as appropriate according to disabilities and special educational needs; ethnicity, culture, language, religious affiliation, national origin and national status; gender; age; and sexual orientation.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Advisory Board, which will regularly monitor the effectiveness of this policy by the following methods:

- the existing workforce will be asked to complete a monitoring form so that data is available on the composition of the staff group
- all applicants for posts will be asked to complete a monitoring form to enable monitoring of our selection decisions against the principles of this policy

- all applicants for posts will be invited to indicate whether they have any special requirements or require reasonable adjustments to enable them to submit an application, attend an interview or carry out the duties of a post, responses to this question and appropriate actions taken by Regent College to accommodate people with disabilities will also be monitored as part of this process
- information arising from this data collection process will be published on an annual basis and will be available to all staff and governors
- staff and governors will be invited to give feedback from time to time, and to make suggestions for improvements
- the incidence of complaints under the above procedures and any other aspect of this policy will also be monitored, and figures published on a regular basis
- the Advisory Board will ensure that information is stored in an appropriate and confidential format in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998