Sheldon School

BE KIND | BE BRAVE | BE THE BEST YOU

Policy Title: **Equal Opportunities Policy**	Effective Date:	February 2026
LT Member Responsible: Deputy Headteacher (responsible for EDI)	Review Date:	February 2029
Governors' Committee Responsible: Community & Culture		

Purpose of the policy

1 **The School's position:** The School supports the principle of equal opportunities and opposes discrimination on the basis of age, sex, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and part-time or fixed-term employment (defined as **Protected Characteristics**). Being a committed equal opportunities employer, the School will take every possible step to ensure that employees are treated equally and fairly. All policies and practices will conform with the principle of equal opportunities in terms of recruitment, selection, training, promotion, career development, discipline, redundancy and dismissal.

Public Sector Equality Duty: As a public authority, the School recognises its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). In carrying out its functions, the School will have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. These duties inform decision-making across staffing, pupils, curriculum, and policy development.

To whom does this policy apply?

2 **Application:** This policy applies to the School's employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, to ex-employees, to job applicants and to individuals such as agency staff and consultants and volunteers who are not our employees, but who work at the School (collectively workers).

3 **Wider School Community:** While this policy primarily addresses employment and workforce matters, the School's commitment to equality, inclusion and non-discrimination also underpins its approach to pupils, parents, carers, visitors and the wider community. This operates alongside related policies including the Equality Information and Objectives Policy, Behaviour Policy, SEND Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

4 **Workers' duties:** All workers have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, to treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against, harass or victimise other members of staff, whether junior or senior to them. In some situations, the School may be at risk of being held responsible for the acts of individual members of staff and will not tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour.

Personnel responsible

5 **Overall responsibility:** The Trustees have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. T he Trustees have delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Headteacher.

6 **Management:** Those working at a management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the aims and objectives of the School with regard to equal opportunities.

7 **Questions about this policy:** All members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. If you are involved in management or recruitment, or if you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Headteacher.

Forms of discrimination

8 **Types:** Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

9 **Direct discrimination:** Direct discrimination occurs where:

9.1 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.

9.2 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.

9.3 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 to be (but may not actually be) homosexual.

10 **Indirect discrimination:** 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.

11 **Victimisation and harassment:** 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 School's grievance policy).

Recruitment and selection

12 **School's position:** The School aims to ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment because of a Protected Characteristic. Recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and that sufficiently diverse sectors of the community are reached. Job selection criteria are reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.

Staff training and promotion and conditions of service

13 **The School's position:** Staff training needs shall be identified through regular staff appraisals. All workers will be given an equal opportunity and access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation. All promotion decisions shall be made on the basis of merit.

14 **Terms and conditions:** Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are available to all workers who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

Disability discrimination

15 **Informing the School:** If you are disabled, or become disabled in the course of your employment, you are encouraged to tell us about your condition. This is to enable us to support you as much as possible and to ensure that you are not treated less favourably because of something related to your disability.

16 **Reasonable adjustments:** You may also wish to advise your Line Manager of any reasonable adjustments to your working conditions or the duties of your job which you consider to be necessary, or which would assist you in the performance of your duties. This may involve the provision of an additional piece of equipment or assistance in helping you to perform your work. Your Line Manager may wish to consult with you and with your medical adviser(s) about possible reasonable adjustments. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals and they will be accommodated where possible and proportionate to the needs of your job. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for us to accommodate the suggested adjustments and we will ensure that we provide you with information as to the basis of our decision not to make any adjustments.

17 **Physical features:** The School will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether it can make any changes to help remove disadvantages which these may create for disabled users. Where possible and proportionate, the School will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises.

Fixed-term employees

18 **Monitoring:** The School will monitor our use of fixed-term employees and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress within the School to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

Part-time workers

19 **Monitoring:** The School will monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will also ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under the School's flexible working policy.

Agency workers

20 **Monitoring:** The School will monitor agency workers to ensure that they are treated no less favourably than a comparable worker in relation to accessing collective facilities and amenities at the School. The School will also monitor the use of temporary work agencies and subject to the exceptions set out in the Agency Workers Regulations 2010, will ensure that all agency workers have the same basic working conditions they would have been entitled to had they been recruited by the School directly into a comparable role.

Breaches of the policy

21 **Complaints:** If you believe that you may have been disadvantaged or harrassed because of a Protected Characteristic, you are encouraged to raise the matter through the School's grievance procedure. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure.

22 **False allegations:** These procedures apply during and after termination of your employment. Workers who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations of a breach in this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

23 **Disciplinary action:** If, after investigation, you are proven to have engaged in any unwanted conduct because of a Protected Characteristic, or otherwise acted in breach of this policy, you will be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases, such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The School will always take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.