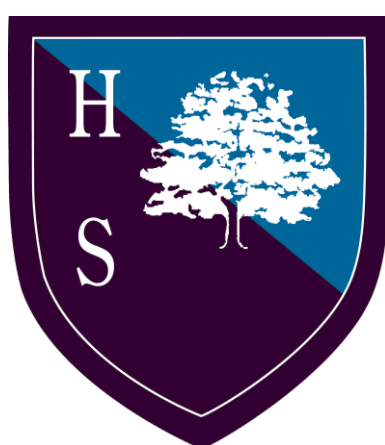


Equal Opportunities Policy

Heathcote School & Science College



Approved by the Governing Board:	Autumn 2025
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To be reviewed:	Every 3 years
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Next review date:	Autumn 2028
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Other Documentation

This policy should be read in reference with the following documents:

- Behaviour Policy
- Peer on Peer Abuse policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Accessibility Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Sex and Relationship Education Policy
- Equality Objectives Policy (2025–2028)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Heathcote School Pledge

The policy is written with guidance from the following documents/websites.

We will consult the following guidance to support our understanding of law surrounding protected characteristics.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/what_equality_law_means_for_you_as_an_employer_-_recruitment.pdf

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Heathcote School Equal Opportunities Policy (2025–2028)

Aims

At Heathcote School, **equal opportunities are integral to our ethos, values and strategic vision.**

We are committed to ensuring that every member of our community—pupils, staff, parents, carers and visitors—is treated with dignity and respect and has fair access to opportunities to succeed.

We expect all pupils and staff to **challenge and act upon any form of prejudice, discrimination or harassment**, including racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, ageism and religious intolerance (see Appendix 1).

We are proactive in promoting **inclusion, diversity and mutual respect** through our policies, curriculum, assemblies, enrichment opportunities and community partnerships.

Through this policy, the Governing Body and school aim to:

- Fulfil our legal duties under the **Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty, and Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.**
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of school life, from recruitment to curriculum design.
- Foster a **zero-tolerance culture** towards discrimination and harassment, ensuring swift and transparent responses to any incident.
- Actively redress historic or systemic inequalities through strategic planning and targeted intervention.
- Ensure that equality and inclusion remain high on the school's strategic agenda and are reviewed annually.
- Develop a workforce and leadership structure that reflects the diversity of the community we serve.

Legal Framework and Justification

The **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** requires all public authorities, including schools, to have **due regard** to the need to:

1. **Eliminate** unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
2. **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The **Equality Act 2010** defines nine *protected characteristics*:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

- Sexual orientation

Discrimination can take the following forms:

- Direct or indirect discrimination
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments
- Discrimination arising from disability
- Harassment
- Victimisation

(See Appendix 2 for definitions.)

Heathcote School also recognises that individuals have **intersectional identities**, meaning that experiences of discrimination may overlap. We commit to addressing inequality in all its forms.

Our Equal Opportunities Approach

We view equality not as a single policy, but as a **whole-school commitment** embedded across our systems and culture. This policy should be read alongside our **Equality Objectives Policy (2025–2028)**, **Safeguarding Policy**, **Child on child abuse Policy**, and **Recruitment and Selection Policy**.

We are proud to be a **community school**, serving and reflecting the diversity of our local area. Our curriculum promotes understanding of **British Values** and celebrates the cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of our pupils.

As an employer, we are committed to **ethical recruitment**, **fair progression**, **flexible working**, and **work–life balance**.

Equality Objectives (2025–2028)

Our Equality Objectives, aligned to the **School Improvement Plan (SIP)**, are to:

1. **Recruitment and Workforce Diversity** – Undertake annual analysis of recruitment, retention and promotion data by race, gender and disability.
2. **Representation and Inclusion** – Ensure all committees, leadership teams and pupil groups reflect the diversity of the school population.
3. **Training and Professional Development** – Train all staff and governors in equality, diversity and unconscious bias, and evaluate impact annually.
4. **Curriculum Representation** – Ensure all subjects include diverse voices, histories and perspectives, reflecting our community and global society.
5. **LGBTQ+ Inclusion** – Deliver a whole-school approach to tolerance and understanding, with focused work during **LGBTQ+ History Month**.
6. **Data and Monitoring** – Maintain robust data systems to monitor outcomes for all groups with protected characteristics.

Progress against these objectives is reported annually to the Governing Body and published on the school website.

Roles and Responsibilities

All Members of the School Community

- Uphold the values of equality, diversity and respect in conduct and language.
- Challenge discrimination and prejudice wherever it occurs.
- Celebrate diversity and inclusion through participation in school life.
- Embody the **Heathcote School Pledge** (Appendix 6).

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- Lead the implementation of this policy and monitor its impact.
- Model equitable and inclusive leadership.
- Analyse progress and behaviour data to identify and address disparities.
- Ensure equalities are integral to the curriculum, pastoral systems and enrichment provision.
- Maintain accurate records of equality-related incidents and follow up according to policy.
- Report annually to governors on equality performance.
- Keep the policy aligned with current legislation and DfE guidance.

Governing Body

- Ensure equality objectives are embedded in the **School Improvement Plan**.
- Monitor compliance with statutory duties and the impact of equality actions.
- Review this policy and equality objectives at least every three years.
- Strive for a governing body composition that reflects the diversity of the school community.

Teachers and Support Staff

- Promote equality and inclusion in lessons, displays, assemblies and interactions.
- Monitor pupil progress to identify and close attainment gaps.
- Use inclusive teaching strategies and materials that reflect diversity.
- Participate in training and professional reflection on equality practice.
- Embody the **Heathcote School Pledge**

Pupils

- Participate in equality and diversity education.
- Contribute to a respectful, inclusive school culture.
- Engage in pupil voice forums and the School Council to help shape equality initiatives.
- Embody the **Heathcote School Pledge**

Parents and Carers

- Support the school's commitment to equality.
- Model respect and tolerance in communications and interactions.
- Work with the school to address incidents or concerns fairly and constructively.
- Support the **Heathcote School Pledge**

Equal Opportunities in Employment

Heathcote School is an **Equal Opportunities Employer** and is committed to inclusive employment practices.

Family-Friendly and Flexible Working

We offer flexible arrangements, job share, parental and carers' leave, in line with operational needs and staff wellbeing.

Religious Observance and Prayer

We provide appropriate facilities for prayer and reflection and consider religious observance requests on a case-by-case basis.

Representation and Recruitment

We aim to have representation of **World Majority** staff at all levels. All recruitment materials include an equality statement, and selection panels receive training in inclusive recruitment.

Disability and Accessibility

We are a **Disability Confident** school and ensure our environment, materials and communications are accessible. Reasonable adjustments are made for staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions.

Wellbeing and Mental Health

Staff wellbeing is prioritised through SLT oversight. Mental health support and workload monitoring are integral to our strategy.

Equal Opportunities for Pupils

Admissions

We follow the Local Authority Admissions Policy, ensuring no discrimination based on sex, race, disability, faith, or socio-economic status.

Curriculum and Learning

Our curriculum:

- Reflects the diversity of society and promotes global citizenship.
- Challenges stereotypes and bias.
- Provides fair representation of all cultures, genders and abilities.
- Includes opportunities to explore identity, human rights and social justice through PIE, RE and cross-curricular learning.
- Ensures careers guidance, subject choices and extracurricular access are equitable and inclusive.

Pastoral Support and Wellbeing

We have a strong pastoral system including counsellors, therapists and designated wellbeing leads.

Pupils are taught strategies for maintaining mental health and respecting others' rights.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team will monitor this policy through:

- Annual analysis of workforce data (recruitment, retention, promotions).
- Annual analysis of pupil attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance data.
- Review of equality-related incidents and actions taken.
- Staff and pupil surveys on inclusion and wellbeing.
- Annual equality report to governors.

This policy will be reviewed every **three years**, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes.

Appendix 1: Definitions of Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 identifies nine protected characteristics. Individuals must not be discriminated against, harassed, or victimised because of any of these.

Protected Characteristic	Definition
Age	A person must not be discriminated against because they are (or are not) a certain age or age group. This includes discrimination by <i>perception</i> (being perceived as a certain age) or <i>association</i> (being connected to someone of a particular age). <i>Note:</i> The Act does not apply to school-aged pupils in respect of age discrimination.
Disability	A person must not be discriminated against because they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes discrimination by <i>perception</i> or <i>association</i> .
Gender Reassignment	Protection applies to anyone who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (social, medical, or otherwise) to reassign their gender. Individuals do not need to have undergone medical treatment to be protected. Discrimination by perception or association is also unlawful.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership are protected. This does not apply to people who are single, engaged, divorced, or widowed.
Pregnancy and Maternity	A person must not be treated unfavourably because they are pregnant, have given birth, are breastfeeding, or have experienced a miscarriage or stillbirth. <i>Schools must ensure that pregnant pupils are not denied access to education.</i> Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education during any period of absence related to pregnancy or parenting.
Race	Protection covers colour, nationality, citizenship, and ethnic or national origins. This includes individuals of mixed heritage and groups such as Black Britons, British Asians, Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities, and people of Jewish or Sikh heritage.
Religion or Belief	Protection covers any religion or lack of religion, as well as philosophical beliefs that are genuinely held, serious, and relate to an important aspect of human life. It also protects against discrimination by perception or association. <i>Example:</i> Belief in man-made climate change may be protected; beliefs that conflict with others' fundamental rights are not.
Sex (as assigned at birth)	Protection applies to men, women, boys, and girls. It also applies where a person is perceived to be, or associated with, someone of a particular sex.
Sexual Orientation	Protection applies to all orientations — heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and others. This includes discrimination by perception or association. It also includes protection for how a person chooses to express their orientation.

Appendix 2: Discrimination, Harassment, and Victimisation

Discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the grounds of any protected characteristic are unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. Heathcote School will investigate all reported incidents thoroughly and act in line with relevant policies.

Forms of Unlawful Behaviour

- **Direct Discrimination:** Treating someone less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic.
- **Indirect Discrimination:** Applying a rule, policy, or practice that appears neutral but disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.
- **Discrimination Arising from Disability:** Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected to their disability, rather than the disability itself.
- **Failure to Make Reasonable Adjustments:** Not taking reasonable steps to remove barriers faced by disabled people.
- **Harassment:** Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Examples include:
 - Derogatory remarks, jokes, or slurs
 - Unwelcome physical contact
 - Exclusion from discussions, meetings, or opportunities
 - Unjust criticism or excessive scrutiny
 - Offensive signs or imagery
- **Victimisation:** Treating someone unfairly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a concern under the Equality Act.

Heathcote School has a **zero-tolerance approach** to discrimination and harassment and will provide support for any pupil, parent, or staff member affected.

Appendix 3: Implementing the Equality Act for Staff

The table below shows examples of how Heathcote School implements the Equality Act 2010 for staff.

Protected Characteristic	Examples of School Practice
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair recruitment processes, including blind shortlisting. • Flexible and part-time working options. • No enforced retirement age.
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable adjustments to working conditions, hours, and environments. • Commitment to the Disability Confident Scheme. • Fully accessible buildings and facilities. • Recruitment materials explicitly encourage applications from disabled professionals.
Gender Reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-neutral dress code. • Inclusive facilities and policies. • Comprehensive staff training on LGBTQ+ inclusion. • Support for staff during transition.
Pregnancy and Maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable adjustments during pregnancy and on return to work. • Flexible and shared parental leave options. • Keeping in Touch (KIT) days. • Phased return to work support.
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted recruitment to improve representation of World Majority professionals. • Anti-racism and cultural awareness training. • Active monitoring of workforce diversity.
Religion or Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of prayer and quiet spaces. • Leave for religious observance. • Consultation with staff to ensure inclusivity of faith practices.
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blind shortlisting and fair promotion processes. • Shared parental leave entitlement. • Equal pay monitoring.
Sexual Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive workplace culture celebrating LGBTQ+ identities. • Staff training on LGBTQ+ equality. • Visibility of role models and events such as Pride Month.

Appendix 4: Implementing the Equality Act for Pupils

The Equality Act 2010 protects all pupils from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in education. Heathcote School ensures equal access to the curriculum, enrichment, and school life for all pupils.

Protected Characteristic	Examples of School Practice
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable adjustments to school policies and curriculum delivery. • Bespoke provision through SEND and Hearing Impairment teams. • Fully accessible classrooms and resources. • Positive representation of disability through assemblies and SMSC.
Gender Reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-neutral uniform and facilities. • Inclusive RSE and PIE curriculum. • Use of preferred names and pronouns. • Individual transition support plans.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum content on healthy and respectful relationships, including same-sex partnerships.
Pregnancy and Maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bespoke support plans for pregnant or parenting pupils. • Flexible arrangements for learning and attendance.
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebration of cultural diversity through events such as Black History Month. • Curriculum representation across subjects. • Monitoring of achievement and participation by ethnicity. • Active recruitment of diverse pupil leaders.
Religion or Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive teaching in RE and PIE. • Promotion of religious tolerance through assemblies and SMSC. • Provision of prayer space, especially during Ramadan.
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality promoted through curriculum and assemblies. • Equal access to leadership roles and extracurricular activities. • Monitoring of subject choice and achievement by gender.
Sexual Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum content in RSE and PIE. • Staff training on inclusive language and practice. • Celebration of LGBTQ+ History Month and visibility campaigns.

Heathcote School Pledge



We are Heathcote, where **everyone is welcome**.

As a school, we **accept** and **celebrate** every member of **our community** as an individual who contributes to the greatness and success of our school.

Together, we commit to encouraging **positive language** and **protecting** all members of **our community from discrimination and disrespect**, in person and online.

This includes discrimination based on:

Disability	Heritage	Race
Ethnicity	Identity	Religion
Gender	Neurodiversity	Sexuality
	Physical appearance	

As a community, we each commit to ensuring **our language and behaviour** makes everyone feel:

- Welcome
- Able to be themselves
- Accepted

We understand and accept the **responsibility** to **report incidents** and **positively challenge language and behaviour** that does not adhere to this pledge.

Encourage Challenge Succeed