Equal Opportunities Policy

Applies to the whole school, including EYFS

Last Full Review: September 2026 (Head) Date of Next Review: September 2027

Policy Statement

The Council of The Girls' Day School Trust (the "Trust") is committed to equal opportunities in education and will not unlawfully discriminate against, or treat less favourably, any pupil at, or applicant to, its schools on the grounds of race, disability, sex, religion or belief (or lack thereof), gender reassignment, sexual orientation, or pregnancy or maternity ('protected characteristics'). The Trust will also not discriminate against, or treat less favourably, any pupil at, or applicant to, its schools because they are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. All pupils and staff shall be encouraged to value and respect others and to challenge inappropriate attitudes, behaviour and practices.

This policy embraces the following areas.

(a) Admissions

Each school has its own written admissions policy for principal points of entry, and a copy is available from the school.

Admission to schools is usually dependent on achieving an acceptable standard in an assessment or examination appropriate to the age group and academic pace of the school, as well as the availability of places. Due consideration will be given to educational experience in assessing pupils' achievement of an 'acceptable standard', and to maximising access for pupils to whom the school can add value. All examinations and tests are expected to be free of bias, and broadly to reflect expectations of pupils at the relevant stage in their development, regardless of background.

Arrangements for tests are also made with the intention of ensuring that no candidate is unfairly disadvantaged, and, where practicable, reasonable adjustments will be made to cater for individual needs.

(b) Access

In addition to admission, pupils with protected characteristics (as defined above) will not be discriminated against in relation to access to the school's benefits, facilities or services.

There are special considerations in relation to pupils with a disability and access for pupils with disabilities is dealt with in (f) below.

(c) Transfers

Arrangements for transfer between key stages (e.g. from Prep to Senior Department and entry to the Sixth Form in all-through Trust schools) are subject to the terms of the contract with parents and written criteria published by the school.

Continuity of education is anticipated normally throughout each age range (i.e. the Junior and Senior Departments) and at the key stages of transfer unless in the professional judgement of the Head after due deliberation the pupil will not benefit from continuing to be educated at the school or has not attained a sufficiently high standard of work or behaviour for continuation or for entry to the next stage. Factors such as poor behaviour or lack of motivation on the part of the pupil or an irreparable breakdown of the necessary relationship of trust and confidence between the family and the school may be taken into account. As a term of the parent contract, parents and pupils agree to be bound by the school rules and to support the school in maintaining its ethos and good standards of behaviour.

Clear procedures must be in place to keep parents informed of pupil progress in any of the above areas at the earliest opportunity, and of any targets to be met should transfer be in doubt. Specific guidance and timings for certain key stages of transfer are set out in the parent contract.

Transfer between Trust schools, for example as a result of relocation or the need for boarding facilities, may be arranged. Any such transfer will be subject to the availability of a place and the professional judgment of the school in which a place is being sought of the ability of the pupil concerned to benefit from such a place, given the overall nature of the intake. This may necessitate the pupil's involvement in some form of admissions procedure, in addition to a recommendation from the original Head.

There is no entitlement to transfer from a GDST school to one of the Academies for which it is a sponsor.

(d) Special educational needs

The Trust has established guidelines for its schools on responding to pupils with special educational needs ("SEN"), which are explained in the Trust's Inclusion Policy. All schools have a written policy setting out their approach to identification/support and highlighting any additional costs to parents.

Initial and on-going pupil assessment is intended to enable pupil difficulties/special gifts to be identified / supported. Each school should designate an appropriate member of staff to co-ordinate arrangements for pupils with SEN.

(e) Religious observance

Schools are required to provide assemblies which bring together the whole community to reflect on moral, spiritual and ethical issues, and promote a sense of the existence of God or of a reality which transcends the purely material. This is generally achieved within a broadly Christian framework but should take account of the specific needs of the school community.

Arrangements can be made for pupils to be excused from attendance, at the written request of parents.

The Trust's policy is that Religious Studies should be accessible to all pupils. However, pupils may be excused from all or part of the programme at the written request of parents.

Schools will seek to make appropriate arrangements to reflect the requirements of different religious faiths with regard to acceptable variations to school uniform (see the Trust's Uniform Guidance), catering arrangements and authorised absence for religious festivals falling during term time. These may include reasonable arrangements to allow for specific acts of religious observance in school.

(f) Disability and access for people with disabilities

In this policy "disability" has the meaning set out in the Equality Act 2010, that is, a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The Trust will make reasonable adjustments to address the individual needs of all pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities as explained in its guidance on the non-premises aspects of disability legislation.

Statutory requirements regarding access for people with disabilities to new buildings are met and the Trust has a published Accessibility Strategy. Some of the Trust's existing premises are subject to listed building and other planning restrictions or cannot readily be modified. However, each school has its own accessibility plan, which sets out a structured programme to increase access over time to its facilities, curriculum, and provision of information.

(g) Scholarships, bursaries and prizes

Arrangements for the award of scholarships, bursaries and prizes are made with the intention of facilitating increased access for candidates.

(h) Exclusion

Schools are required to follow the Council's procedures for the fixed period or permanent exclusion of pupils.

Pupils will not be excluded from the schools on the basis of a protected characteristic (as defined above) or because they are perceived to have a protected characteristics or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Where a pupil with a disability is facing exclusion, schools should consider whether or not the pupil's disability has a behavioural component, and reasonable adjustments will be made to take account of the possible effect of this, alongside the impact of the pupil's behaviour on the school community. In some circumstances, it may still be appropriate to exclude the pupil.

(i) Other policies

Individual schools operate a range of other policies in all of which they are expected to reflect equal opportunities' issues. These include policies on, for example:

- safeguarding
- inclusion
- discipline / sanctions
- anti-bullying
- access / support for school trips and extra-curricular activities
- entry to public examinations.

(j) Monitoring of policy implementation

Applications and admissions are subject to ethnic and disability monitoring, and such monitoring will be undertaken in respect of academic performance over time. Arrangements for reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive practices are set out in the Trust's Inclusion Policy.

(k) Complaints

Any parent who is not satisfied that the above policies have been properly applied may make a complaint in accordance with the Trust's formal complaints procedure, which complies with all statutory requirements and is available from the school.

Pupils should be made aware of the mechanisms available to them within school to raise matters of concern of an academic or pastoral nature.