



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Date: Sept 2026	Next review: Sept 2027
Ratified by: Megan McNamara	

1. Purpose and scope

Susi Earnshaw Theatre School is committed to providing an inclusive environment in which every pupil and adult is valued, treated with dignity and able to participate fully. The school opposes unlawful discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity, mutual respect and positive relationships throughout school life.

This policy applies to pupils and prospective pupils, parents and carers, staff, volunteers, visitors, contractors and professionals working on the school's behalf. It applies to admissions, education, pastoral care, performances, rehearsals, trips, work-related learning, use of facilities, employment and all other school activities, including online activity connected with the school.

2. Legal framework

This policy has regard to:

- the Equality Act 2010, including Part 5 (work), Part 6 (education) and the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and staff;
- the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended, and the Department for Education's Independent school standards guidance (April 2026); and
- Department for Education advice, The Equality Act 2010 and schools.

3. Protected characteristics

The protected characteristics set out in section 4 of the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin)
- religion or belief (including lack of religion or belief)
- sex
- sexual orientation

The pupil provisions of Part 6 of the Act do not apply in exactly the same way to every characteristic: age and marriage and civil partnership are not protected characteristics for pupils in the schools provisions. However, the Independent School Standards require pupils to be taught, in an age-appropriate way, to respect other people with particular regard to all the protected characteristics. The school also values people irrespective of background, family circumstances, social or economic status, political opinion or any other personal circumstance.

4. Forms of unlawful conduct

The school will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This includes:

- direct discrimination - treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic, including because of a characteristic they are perceived to have or their association with another person;
- indirect discrimination - applying a provision, criterion or practice that puts people sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage, unless it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim;
- discrimination arising from disability and failure to make reasonable adjustments;
- harassment - unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and
- victimisation - subjecting someone to a detriment because they have raised, supported or given evidence about an equality concern or complaint.

Prejudice-related language, stereotyping, bullying and discriminatory behaviour are unacceptable even where the conduct may not meet a statutory definition.

5. Responsibilities

The proprietor has overall responsibility for ensuring that the school meets its legal duties and that this policy is implemented and reviewed. The Headteacher is responsible for day-to-day implementation, staff awareness, appropriate action in response to concerns and reporting significant matters to the proprietor.

All staff, volunteers and contractors must model respectful behaviour, challenge discrimination and prejudice, make reasonable adjustments within their role, and report concerns promptly. Pupils are expected to respect others, follow the Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies and tell a trusted adult about discriminatory or prejudicial behaviour. Parents and carers are encouraged to support the school's inclusive ethos and raise concerns promptly.

6. Admissions, education and school life

The school will apply its published admissions arrangements fairly and consistently. A pupil or prospective pupil will not be unlawfully discriminated against in relation to admission, the provision of education, access to any benefit, facility or service, exclusion or any other detriment.

We will:

- maintain high expectations for all pupils and provide equitable access to academic and vocational learning;
- allocate roles, casting, performance, leadership, enrichment, trips and other opportunities through fair and transparent criteria, while allowing legitimate artistic, safety and curriculum requirements to be considered;
- avoid assumptions about ability, interests, behaviour, appearance or future pathways based on sex, race, disability or any other characteristic;
- use names and language that are respectful and appropriate, and consider individual needs sensitively and lawfully;
- review dress, costume, changing, hair and appearance requirements for fairness, dignity, safeguarding, safety and reasonable adjustment; and
- seek to remove barriers affecting attendance, participation, achievement, wellbeing or a sense of belonging.

7. Curriculum, teaching and resources

The curriculum, including PSHE and the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision, will actively promote respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics. Teaching will be accurate, balanced, age appropriate and sensitive to pupils' learning needs. It will enable pupils to recognise and challenge stereotypes, prejudice and unfair discrimination.

Teachers will ensure that the delivery of the curriculum does not discriminate against individual pupils. Resources, repertoire, practitioners, artists, historical examples, images and visiting speakers will be selected to represent a broad range of people and experiences wherever appropriate. Controversial or sensitive issues may be explored, but no pupil will be singled out or expected to speak on behalf of a group or characteristic.

8. Disability, SEND and reasonable adjustments

The school will not treat a disabled pupil unfavourably because of something arising from their disability unless the treatment can be objectively justified. We will take reasonable steps to avoid substantial disadvantage, including considering changes to policies and practices and providing appropriate auxiliary aids and services. Reasonable adjustments will be considered in consultation with the pupil and their parents or carers and, where appropriate, relevant professionals. Parents and carers will not be charged for reasonable adjustments required under the Equality Act 2010.

Adjustments may relate to teaching, assessment, communication, timetabling, movement, physical access, costumes, rehearsals, performances, trips or pastoral support. Decisions will take account of effectiveness, practicability, health and safety, safeguarding, resources and the need to maintain essential learning or performance outcomes. The school's Accessibility Plan sets out its longer-term approach to increasing access for disabled pupils.

9. Recruitment, employment and professional conduct

Employment decisions, including recruitment, selection, pay, training, promotion, allocation of work, appraisal, discipline and dismissal, will be made fairly and without unlawful discrimination. Safer recruitment and safeguarding requirements continue to apply. The school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and staff and will not normally ask health or disability questions before an offer of employment except where the law permits this.

Staff must not discriminate against, harass or victimise pupils, colleagues, applicants, parents, carers or others connected with the school. Concerns involving staff will be managed under the appropriate staff conduct, grievance, disciplinary, low-level concerns or allegations procedure, as applicable.

10. Preventing and responding to incidents

Any discriminatory incident, prejudice-related language or bullying will be taken seriously. Staff will act promptly to stop the behaviour, support those affected, establish the facts, consider safeguarding needs and apply proportionate educational or disciplinary action. The response will address the behaviour and its impact, not simply whether harm was intended. Relevant incidents will be recorded and patterns monitored.

Where a concern may involve abuse, exploitation, significant harm or a safeguarding risk, it must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The school will consider the needs of all pupils involved while prioritising safety and preventing retaliation.

11. Raising a concern or complaint

Pupils may speak to any member of staff or use the school's usual pastoral and pupil voice routes. Parents and carers should normally raise concerns with the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher. Staff should raise employment concerns through their line manager or the appropriate staff procedure. Concerns about the Headteacher should be referred to the proprietor.

Formal complaints will be considered under the school's Complaints Policy. No person will be treated adversely for raising a concern in good faith or supporting another person's complaint. Information will be shared only with those who need it, subject to safeguarding, employment and legal requirements.

12. Monitoring and review

The school will monitor the implementation and impact of this policy through relevant information such as admissions, participation, achievement, exclusions or sanctions, complaints, bullying and prejudice-related incidents, reasonable adjustments and pupil, parent and staff feedback. Information will be considered proportionately and with regard to confidentiality and data protection.

The Headteacher will identify patterns, barriers or inequalities and take appropriate action. The proprietor will review this policy at least annually and sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, school circumstances or an incident indicates that changes are required.

13. Related policies

- Accessibility Plan
- Admissions Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Curriculum and PSHE policies
- Safer Recruitment Policy

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct