READING BLUE COAT

Equal Opportunities for Students Policy

Introduction

Reading Blue Coat understands that all schools have a legal duty to uphold the law on equal opportunities for students and staff alike. By virtue of paragraph 3 of the Independent School Standards Regulations, which relates to quality of education provided, teaching at schools must not discriminate against students in accordance with Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010. In addition, paragraph 5 which relates to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students requires schools to ensure that, 'principles are actively promoted which encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act'.

The School recognises that equality, inclusion and safeguarding are closely linked. In implementing this policy, the School will take a child-centred approach, balancing its responsibilities under safeguarding legislation, the Equality Act 2010 and relevant statutory guidance. Decisions affecting students will be made on an individual basis, taking account of welfare, safety, dignity, protected characteristics and the rights of others within the school community.

Regulatory Framework

This policy has been prepared to meet the School's obligations under the:

- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This policy has regard to the following statutory guidance and advice:

- Equality Act 2010 explanatory notes
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical Guidance for Schools in England (July 2014 with the last update on 30 July 2024. Consultation on revised guidance ended in September 2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026 + October update)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Accessibility Plan
- Admissions Policy

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- EAL Policy
- Gender Questioning Children Policy
- Permanent Exclusion & Required Removal Policy

- Recruitment, Selection and Disclosure Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Student Development (SEND) Policy
- Wellbeing and Positive Mental Health Policy

Aims

The aims of this policy and the School's ethos as a whole is to:

Communicate the School's commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities for its students

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics
- Promote equal treatment for all students in the School community
- Create and maintain an open and supportive environment, free from discrimination
- Foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the School
- Comply with the School's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010
- Remove or help to overcome barriers for students where they already exist
- Enforce that all discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic is unacceptable and will not be tolerated

Procedures

All members of the Reading Blue Coat school community are expected to comply with this policy and treat others with dignity at all times.

All parents are expected to support the aims of this policy and the School's ethos of tolerance and respect.

All staff at the School have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of the School with regard to equal opportunities.

Developing a Culture of Understanding

School and Year group assemblies, EDI events, RBC inclusion groups, tutor time and one-to-one curriculum lessons and the co-curriculum are used to:

- Promote tolerance and respect for others
- Encourage an open-minded approach that recognises the contributions made by different cultures
- To make it clear how the School will deal with incidents of offensive language and behaviour in a prompt but sensitive manner

Discrimination

At Reading Blue Coat, we understand that:

- The main types of unlawful discrimination cover acts of direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on grounds of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or maternity.
- A failure to make reasonable adjustments also amounts to unlawful discrimination.
- Age discrimination law does not apply to students in schools.

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Reading Blue Coat

The School recognises the benefits of having a diverse school community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Students will be taught to value and respect others.

The School is committed to being an equal opportunities community and is committed to equal treatment for all students, regardless of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or maternity ("protected characteristics").

Admissions

The School treats every application for admission in a fair, open-minded and equal way in accordance with this policy and the *Admissions Policy*.

The School accepts applications from all prospective students irrespective of their cultural background, linguistic background, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, social background or special educational need. In Years 7-10 and the Sixth Form, where we are co-educational, the above list still applies and furthermore, we do not discriminate based on gender.

Means-tested bursaries are offered in order to make it possible for as many people as possible who meet the School's admission criteria to attend the School. Details of our provision for bursaries can be found in the *Admissions Policy*.

Educational services

The School affords all students access to educational provision including all benefits, services, and facilities, irrespective of any protected characteristic (subject to our reasonable adjustments duty and considerations of safety and welfare).

The School will not discriminate against a student on the grounds of any protected characteristic byexcluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The School will:

- Treat all members of the School community with respect and dignity and seek to provide apositive working and learning environment free from discrimination

- Endeavour to meet the needs of all children and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics
- Ensure that students with English as an additional language and students with an Education Health Care Plan receive necessary educational and welfare support
- Monitor the admission and progress of students from different backgrounds
- Challenge inappropriate and unacceptable discriminatory behaviour by students and staff. The School recognises that bullying, harassment or prejudice-related incidents motivated by a protected characteristic may also constitute safeguarding concerns. Such incidents will be recorded, monitored and addressed in accordance with the School's Anti-Bullying and Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

- Encourage children to work and play freely and have respect for all other studentsirrespective of any protected characteristic.
- Offer all students access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of co-curricular activities
- Work with students, parents, staff, governors and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in the School
- Ensure that it reviews, monitors, and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices
- Use the curriculum, assemblies, tutor group time, Wellbeing lessons, Futures lessons and the compulsory Religious Studies GCSE to:
    - Promote tolerance of and respect for each other, paying particular regard to theprotected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
    - Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
    - Encourage children to question and challenge assumptions and stereotypes in order to better understand discriminatory behaviours and bias.
- Promote safe and responsible use of technology and educate students about online harms, including discriminatory content, hate incidents, misogyny, extremism, misinformation, disinformation and cyberbullying.

The School recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability whetheror not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms (including cyberbullying) are unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the School's *Anti-Bullying Policy*, *Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy* and *Staff Handbook*.

Religious Belief

Reading Blue Coat welcomes students of all faiths and of no faith. Although Reading Blue Coat School has a Christian foundation, the School does not select for entry on the basis of religious belief, and it offers the opportunity for Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, etc to practise their own faiths subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the rights and freedoms of other members of the School community. Parents should be aware that students are expected to attend Christian religious services during their time at the School.

The governing body, through the Senior Leadership Team, actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Requests for variation in the School uniform

All students are required to wear a uniform until Year 12, and a 'business dress' code operates for Years 12 and 13. The Headmaster, or relevant Director of Section, will consider requests from parents and students for variations to the uniform for reasons related to disability, gender questioning, ~~gender reassignment,~~ cultural and/or on religious grounds provided they are consistent with the School's *Health and Safety Policy* and that such request/s are reasonable in all the circumstances, including in light of the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn to school, parents are encouraged to discuss the matter with the relevant Director of Section, or Senior Deputy Head, in advance.

Reasonable adjustments for students with disability

The School recognises its duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability to ensure they do not suffer a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other students, including during the admissions process.

Where the School is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, it will consult with parents about what reasonable adjustments, if any, the School is able to make to avoid their child being put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other students.

The School will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a student's disability and the resources available to the School. Further information on the School's reasonable adjustments duty can be found in the School's *Accessibility Plan* and *Learning Support Policy*.

The School has an *Accessibility Plan* in place which can be found on the School website and a hard copy can be made available upon request. This sets out the School's plan to increase the extent to which disabled students can participate in the School's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the School for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled students are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School; and improve the delivery of information to disabled students which is readily accessible to students who are not disabled.

Monitoring and review

The Headmaster regularly monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy and reports to the Governors regularly on the policy's effectiveness in practice. The EDI Governor has special responsibility for this policy, reviews and signs it off.

Breaches of this policy

Students who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's *Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy*.

If you believe that a child has received less favourable treatment as a result of a protected characteristic, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to a child's detriment, staff should raise the matter following the procedures laid out in either the *Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy* (Reporting Concerns or Low Level Concerns), *Complaints Policy* or the *Whistleblowing Policy*, all of which are available on the School website.

Authors:	Sarah Landon (Director of EDI) & Kevin Magill (Deputy Head, Education Development)
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References:	• Equality Act 2010 • Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical Guidance for Schoolsin England July 2014 with the last update on 30 July 2024 • Children and Families Act 2014 • Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 • Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2026 with October 2026 update • Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
Agreed by:	 Clare Freeman (Safeguarding Governor) *on behalf of the Full Governing Body*
Date of Agreement:	November 2026