



Brentwood School

Equal Opportunities Policy (Pupils)

Policy Owner:	Deputy Head (Academic) Senior School, Head of Preparatory School		
Relevant to:	Whole School (3-18)		
Relevant Legislation/Guidance:	Independent School Standards Regulations (2014) The Equality Act 2010 Department for Education – Gender separation in mixed schools 2018 ISI Guidance – Inspecting 3(j) in mixed schools that separate by gender 2022 Supreme Court Judgement For Women Scotland Ltd (Appellant) v The Scottish Ministers (Respondent) 2025		
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Related & supporting documents:	Admissions Policy	Accessibility Plan	Anti-Bullying Policy
	Behaviour Management Policy (Prep School)	Behaviour Management Policy (Senior School)	Collective Worship Policy
	Health and Safety Policy	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy (Staff)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY (PUPILS)

General Statement

Our values – *Virtue, Learning, Manners* – were written into the School Statutes of 1622, and their inclusion in this document is a signal of intent that they will be used to inform the decisions we make, whether strategic and long-term or operational and day-to-day. Our values act as our compass: they help point us in the right direction, they are our checks-and-balances, and they underpin everything we do at Brentwood School.

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the values, the aims and ethos of Brentwood School. We welcome applications from candidates with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our pupils for today's world. We concentrate on educating the individual, to provide a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish. This commitment is shared by pupils, staff and governors.

Brentwood School is committed to equal opportunity for all pupils, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (defined as biological sex), or sexual orientation. We are an academically selective school and we believe that the educational experience can only be enriched if children are exposed to as wide a range of cultural experiences as possible whilst they are developing.

We also welcome applications from pupils with special needs and disabilities, and refer parents to our policies covering Admissions and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and to our Accessibility Plan in response to the Equality Act 2010. These are made available on the School's website.

<https://www.brentwoodschool.co.uk/we-are-brentwood/reports-policies>

Aims

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

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics
- Promote equality of opportunity for all members of the School community
- Comply with the School's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010.

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

Admission

The School treats every application for admission in a fair and equal way in accordance with this policy and the School's Admissions Policy. Although an academically selective School, each application will be considered on its merits in accordance with the School's selection criteria based on an applicant's ability and aptitude. The School accepts applications from, and admits, prospective pupils irrespective of their disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (defined as biological sex), or sexual orientation or special educational needs or disability ('SEND').

In order to cope with the academic and social demands of the School, there is an expectation that the pupil must be able to engage in lessons independently. Pupils who have EAL requirements are provided with appropriate support from the EAL department in the Senior School and the EAL Coordinator in the Prep School. We are unable to provide 1:1 tuition in EAL. Please refer to the *Admissions Policy*, which details our English language requirement at admission, and the *Curriculum Policy* for information regarding our identification and assessment of, and support for, pupils who have English as an Additional Language.

Parents must inform the School when submitting the Registration Form of any special circumstances relating to their child that may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and/or ability to participate fully in the education provided by the School. The School will not offer a place to a child with disabilities if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the School cannot adequately cater for or meet their needs.

Bursaries are means tested awards offered to those who achieve well in the School's Entrance Examination and otherwise meet the School's admission criteria but may otherwise be unable to attend the School due to financial hardship. Details of our bursary scheme can be found on our website or obtained from the Admissions Team or Finance Director.

Educational Services

The School affords all pupils 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 pupil on the grounds of any protected characteristic by excluding 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 a positive 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 pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with an Education Health Care Plan receive necessary educational and welfare support;
- monitor the admission and progress of pupils from different backgrounds;
- challenge inappropriate discriminatory behaviour by pupils and staff;
- offer all pupils access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of co-curricular activities;
- work with parents and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in School;
- ensure that it reviews, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices;
- use the curriculum, assemblies and the Wellbeing programme (PSHE) to:
 - promote tolerance of and respect for each other, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
 - promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.

The School recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability whether or not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms is unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Behaviour Management and Anti-bullying policies.

Diamond Model

In the Prep School and the Sixth Form, pupils are taught in co-educational classes. In Years 7–11 of the Senior School, pupils are taught in single-sex classes, however there is no difference in the quality of education provision. The model of single-sex education is popular in Essex (there are eight single-sex selective grammar schools in the county) and, with our frequent opportunities for boys and girls to interact socially and in our co-curricular programme, our 'Diamond Model' gives our pupils "the best of both worlds".

We review our commitment and approach to the Diamond Model annually, ensuring we are compliant with applicable DfE guidance ([Department for Education – Gender separation in mixed schools 2018](#)). In line with this guidance, we have a positive action case for separating pupils by biological sex for academic lessons in Years 7–11, supported by evidence which is shared with ISI inspectors.

In line with the 2025 UK Supreme Court judgement, single-sex classes in Years 7–11 are organised on the basis of biological sex. Where pupils are undergoing gender

reassignment, the School will consider individual requests for access to classes corresponding to their gender identity. Such decisions will be made following a thorough assessment of individual circumstances, privacy considerations, and the welfare of all pupils, and after extensive discussion with the pupil and parents and, where appropriate, external professionals.

Teachers teaching single-sex classes take care to not propagate gender stereotypes through their teaching. Indeed, our teachers challenge gender stereotypes and promote equality through their teaching. During these years, pupils are taught the same compulsory subjects, and have the same choice of optional subjects in Years 7–11. We ensure that any optional subject or subject combination offered to pupils of one sex is available to pupils of the other sex. Any remedial classes, work clinics, revision lessons, special educational needs interventions, initiatives, are available equally to both boys and girls and are arranged co-educationally, subject to need. When choosing GCSE and Sixth Form subject options, we encourage our pupils to consider taking subjects where national rates of participation by girls or boys are disproportionately low.

Sporting activities may, where necessary for reasons of safety or competitive fairness, be organised according to biological sex. The School will consider reasonable adjustments for pupils undergoing gender reassignment, balancing the rights, safety, and welfare of all pupils.

We also ensure that resources are allocated proportionately to both sexes, for example in terms of infrastructure, facilities, staffing, such that neither boys nor girls suffer any detriment due to their sex.

Boys and girls interact socially before and after School, at break times and lunchtimes. Co-curricular activities, such as academic societies, enrichment talks, House activities and competitions, music ensembles, drama productions, the Combined Cadet Force, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, community service, involve boys and girls interacting and learning together in an educational setting.

Gender Reassignment, Transgender, Gender Identity

The School supports transgender pupils by promoting a respectful and inclusive community where all young people are protected from discrimination. We work with each pupil individually, listening to their wishes and respecting their right to privacy, whilst working with both the young person and their parents whenever possible and appropriate. Any support offered by the School is at a pace which is right for the young person.

Practical measures to support transgender pupils:

The Diamond Model enables flexibility for transgender pupils to be taught with the sex with which they identify, and personal pronouns used which have been requested. Such decisions will be made following a thorough assessment of individual circumstances, privacy considerations, and the welfare of all pupils, and after extensive discussion with the pupil and parents and, where appropriate, external professionals.

Access to single-sex toilets and single-sex changing facilities will be arranged according to biological sex. Specific alternative arrangements may be agreed with the pupil, taking into account privacy, safeguarding, and the rights of other pupils: for example, using unisex facilities.

Boarding and overnight accommodation on residential trips:

Boarding and overnight accommodation on residential trips will be arranged according to biological sex. However, the School will consider individual requests from pupils undergoing gender reassignment, balancing the pupil's wishes with safeguarding considerations, privacy, dignity, and the rights of other pupils. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis following discussion with the pupil, parents, and, where appropriate, external professionals, and may involve risk assessments.

Religious Belief

Although the School's religious ethos is based on Christian values and tradition, the School is inclusive and welcomes and respects the rights and freedoms of individuals from other religions and faiths (or with no religion or faith) subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the rights and freedoms of other members of the School community. However, as stated in the Collective Worship Policy, parents should be aware that all pupils are expected to attend Chapel services and Whole School assemblies, which may include a Christian prayer. As per our Collective Worship Policy, no one is forced to participate in the saying of prayers or acts of worship.

The Senior School also has a Muslim prayer space, and a Muslim member of staff leads prayers at lunchtime. During Ramadan, Muslim pupils at the Prep School who wish to join prayers on a Friday at the Senior School are brought across by a member of staff at lunchtime.

Pupils and staff are permitted absence from School for religious observance. This should be requested in advance (as with all other planned absences via the usual processes).

The Governors, through the senior leadership team, actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

School Uniform

All pupils are required to wear uniform. The Uniform and Appearance Regulations have the option of a trousers or skirt uniform for all pupils and are gender-neutral as far as possible.

The Headmaster or Head of Prep (as appropriate) will consider written requests from parents and pupils for variations in the uniform for reasons related to disability, gender reassignment, sex, pregnancy or maternity, temporary injury, and/or on grounds of religion or belief, provided they are consistent with the School's policy on health and safety. The Headmaster or Head of Prep will consider such requests on a case by case basis, and normally arrange to meet with the parents to discuss the implications of such a request.

The availability of gender-neutral uniform options does not determine a pupil's legal sex for the purpose of sex-based distinctions such as single-sex classes or sports.

Reasonable Adjustments for Pupils with Disability

The School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability to ensure they do not suffer a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other pupils.

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. Where a pupil may benefit from auxiliary aids or services, the School will carefully consider whether it is reasonable to provide them, taking into account cost, practicality, and the effectiveness of the aid in removing disadvantage. Further information on the School's reasonable adjustments duty can be found in the School's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy. The School recognises that disabilities can be physical or mental, visible or hidden, and is committed to supporting pupils with hidden disabilities such as autism, ADHD, mental health conditions, or chronic illnesses.

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 pupils can participate in the School's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the School for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School; and improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Dietary Needs

Working with the Catering Team, the School accommodates those pupils, including boarders, with special dietary, medical or religious needs regarding meals. Parents are advised to contact the relevant Head of Year, Boarding Houseparents, or School's Medical Staff, who will discuss with the Catering Manager details of a pupil's dietary requirements. The Catering Team will ensure that those pupils with such known dietary needs receive appropriate meals, adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety.

Pregnancy and maternity

The School will support girls who are pregnant or pupils who are young parents to continue their education wherever possible, balancing the pupil's welfare with safeguarding, health and safety considerations, and the rights of other pupils.

Monitoring and Review

We monitor and review the effectiveness of this Policy by conducting an annual Equal Opportunities Audit, examining different aspects of School life, and incorporating the views of a range of stakeholders, to ensure that no pupils are being disadvantaged or subject to a detriment (because of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation) through our curriculum, co-curriculum or facilities.

Any pupil or parent who believes that discrimination has occurred should raise their concern with their Head of Year or a member of the Senior Leadership Team, who will investigate and respond.

Education Committee Governors review the implementation of this Policy and the Equal Opportunities Audit annually.

Breach of this Policy

If an aspect of the curriculum, co-curriculum or our facilities is found to be in breach of this policy, we aim to remedy this as soon as is practically possible, and no longer than 12 months.

Pupils who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's Behaviour Management Policy.