

The Online School UK



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2026-2027

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Reviewed By	Gemma Wheelwright- Rhodes and Effie Haywood
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1. Introduction

The Online School UK is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful and equitable **educational and working** environment in which **every child, member of staff, prospective employee, volunteer, parent/carers and other member of the school community** is valued, treated fairly and able to participate fully in school life and, where applicable, employment.

The school does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying on the basis of a protected characteristic or any other characteristic, circumstance or personal identity.

As an online school, we recognise that inclusion must apply both within live lessons and across the wider digital environment in which pupils learn and communicate. **It also applies to the digital and working environment in which staff communicate, collaborate and carry out their duties.**

The Online School UK will promote equality of opportunity, respect for diversity and positive relationships between pupils, staff, parents and carers.

The principles in this policy apply to both pupils and staff. Where specific legal duties or arrangements differ between education and employment, these will be addressed in accordance with the relevant legislation, statutory guidance and the school's other policies and procedures.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Equality Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, where applicable
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)- current version
- statutory guidance relating to relationships, sex and health education, where applicable
- relevant Department for Education guidance concerning equality, inclusion and accessibility.

The Online School UK will have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty where it applies to the school.

The school will also have regard to relevant employment legislation and guidance when making decisions affecting staff and prospective employees, including legislation relating to

employment rights, reasonable adjustments, pregnancy and maternity, flexible working and protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

3. Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the basis of the following protected characteristics. The Online School UK upholds these standards **across education, employment and other relevant school activities.**

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Not every protected characteristic applies to pupils in every context. The school will nevertheless ensure that its policies and practices comply with applicable equality law.

For staff and prospective employees, all relevant protected characteristics will be considered throughout recruitment, employment, promotion, training, performance management, disciplinary and grievance processes, and other employment-related decisions.

4. Aims and Objectives

The Online School UK aims to:

1. ensure that all pupils have equal access to education and school opportunities;
2. recognise and value the diversity of the school community;
3. remove or reduce barriers to participation and achievement;
4. provide reasonable adjustments and appropriate support for disabled pupils and staff where required;
5. prevent and respond appropriately to discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
6. challenge prejudice, stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes;
7. promote respectful relationships between people from different backgrounds;
8. ensure that curriculum content reflects and respects the diversity of society;
9. monitor equality-related concerns and identify patterns of disadvantage or discrimination; and

10. ensure that safeguarding concerns involving discriminatory behaviour are considered appropriately;
 11. **promote equality of opportunity for staff and prospective employees throughout recruitment and employment;**
 12. **provide an inclusive working environment in which staff are treated fairly and with dignity and respect;**
 13. **identify and, where reasonably practicable and legally required, remove barriers that may disadvantage staff because of a protected characteristic; and**
 14. **ensure that employment-related decisions are based on appropriate, objective and relevant criteria and are not unlawfully discriminatory.**
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5. Inclusion at The Online School UK

We recognise that online education can create particular barriers to inclusion.

Pupils

The Online School UK will seek to ensure that pupils are able to participate in online learning regardless of disability, additional learning needs, communication needs, background or other relevant circumstances.

The school will consider accessibility when selecting and using digital platforms, learning resources and communication systems.

Where a pupil experiences difficulty accessing online education because of a disability or additional need, the school will consider appropriate reasonable adjustments and other support.

Examples may include:

- alternative formats for learning materials
- captions or transcripts where appropriate
- accessible documents and presentations
- additional processing time
- adjustments to online lesson arrangements
- alternative methods of participation
- assistive technology
- changes to communication methods
- additional pastoral or educational support
- individual adjustments identified through the pupil's SEN support or other appropriate planning.

The school will work with pupils, parents/carers and relevant professionals where appropriate to identify and review barriers to participation.

Our [SEND Policy and Accessibility Plan](#) explores this support section in more depth.

Staff

The Online School UK will also seek to ensure that staff are able to carry out their roles effectively and participate in the working environment regardless of disability, communication needs or other relevant circumstances, subject to the requirements of their role and applicable law.

The school will consider accessibility in relation to staff communication, meetings, training, professional development and other work-related activities.

Where a member of staff experiences a disability or other circumstance requiring reasonable adjustment, the school will consider appropriate adjustments in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and relevant employment procedures. Staff should raise such needs with their line manager or appropriate senior leader.

For staff, adjustments may also include changes to working arrangements, communication methods, meetings, training, equipment, software or other aspects of the working environment, where appropriate and reasonably practicable.

Where appropriate, the school will also work with staff and relevant professionals to identify, implement and review reasonable adjustments and other measures intended to remove workplace barriers.

6. Equality of Access and Opportunity (Pupils and Staff)

Pupils

The school will seek to ensure that decisions about admissions, curriculum access, assessment, behaviour, exclusions, pastoral support, enrichment and other school activities are made fairly and consistently.

The Online School UK will not unlawfully discriminate against a pupil because of a protected characteristic.

Staff

In relation to staff, the school will seek to ensure that decisions about recruitment, selection, induction, training, professional development, promotion, performance management, allocation of opportunities, working arrangements and other employment matters are made fairly, consistently and in accordance with applicable law and school policies.

The Online School UK will not unlawfully discriminate against a member of staff or prospective employee because of a protected characteristic.

Where differences in treatment are necessary to remove disadvantage or meet an individual's needs, the school may provide additional or different support in accordance with the law. Equality does not necessarily mean treating every pupil identically. The school recognises that pupils may require different support or reasonable adjustments to achieve equitable access to education.

Similarly, equality does not necessarily mean treating every member of staff identically. The school recognises that reasonable adjustments or other appropriate measures may be necessary to ensure that staff are able to access employment and participate effectively in the workplace.

7. Race, Ethnicity and Nationality

The Online School UK celebrates the diversity of racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds within its community.

The school values the contribution of staff from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and seeks to ensure that staff and prospective employees are treated fairly and are not subject to unlawful discrimination.

Racist language, stereotyping, harassment, bullying or discriminatory behaviour will not be tolerated. This includes behaviour occurring during lessons, through school communication systems, in group chats or through other online activity where it affects the school community.

This also includes racist or discriminatory behaviour directed towards staff, whether occurring during lessons, through internal communication systems, meetings, email, messaging platforms, social media or other digital environments where it affects the school community or working environment.

Any racist incident will be taken seriously and addressed in accordance with the school's Behaviour, Anti-Bullying and Safeguarding policies.

Where racist or discriminatory behaviour may constitute child-on-child abuse or raise safeguarding concerns, it will be reported to and considered by the DSL in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

8. Religion or Belief

The Online School UK respects pupils and staff of different religions and beliefs, as well as those who do not hold a religious belief. We will seek to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged because of their religion or belief.

The school will also seek to ensure that staff are not unlawfully disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their religion or belief. Where appropriate, the school will consider reasonable and proportionate requests relating to religious observance, dress, dietary requirements, working arrangements or other aspects of employment, taking account of the needs of the individual, the requirements of the role and applicable law.

Religious or belief-based bullying, harassment or discrimination will not be tolerated.

The Online School UK will promote respectful discussion and ensure that pupils are able to express appropriate views without being subjected to abuse or discrimination.

Staff are also expected to treat colleagues, pupils and families with respect where differences of religion or belief arise and to avoid discriminatory or harassing behaviour.

9. Sex, Sexual Orientation and Gender

The Online School UK will not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment based on sex or sexual orientation.

The school will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, bullying or harassment of staff or prospective employees on the basis of sex, sexual orientation or other relevant protected characteristics.

We recognise that discriminatory behaviour may occur online as well as offline and may include derogatory language, sexual harassment, stereotyping, exclusion or targeted abuse.

In relation to staff, this may also include inappropriate comments, unwanted conduct, sexual harassment, discriminatory assumptions or exclusion from workplace opportunities.

Any concern involving sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour or other safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Concerns involving staff conduct will also be managed in accordance with the relevant staff policies and procedures, including the Staff Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Policy or Grievance Policy where appropriate.

The Online School UK will comply with applicable legislation and statutory guidance when making decisions concerning sex, gender and related matters.

10. Disability and Accessibility

The Online School UK recognises that disability may create barriers to accessing education, particularly in an online environment. The school will seek to identify and remove unnecessary barriers and will consider reasonable adjustments where required by law.

The school also recognises that disability may create barriers within the workplace. The school will seek to identify and remove unnecessary barriers for staff and prospective employees and will consider reasonable adjustments where required by law.

Staff should raise concerns about accessibility with the appropriate senior leader or SEND Lead/DSL as applicable.

Staff who require workplace adjustments should raise these with their line manager or appropriate senior leader. The school will consider such requests sensitively and confidentially and in accordance with applicable law and relevant staff procedures.

The school will consider accessibility when:

- selecting online learning platforms;
- providing digital resources;
- communicating with pupils and parents/carers;
- delivering live lessons;
- assessing pupils; and
- providing pastoral and safeguarding support.

The school will also consider accessibility when:

- providing staff with digital systems, software and equipment;
- conducting staff meetings and training;
- providing workplace communications and documents;
- organising recruitment and selection processes; and
- planning working arrangements and professional development opportunities.

The school's Accessibility Plan should be read alongside this policy.

11. Pregnancy and Maternity

The school will not unlawfully discriminate against a pupil or member of staff because of pregnancy or maternity.

Where a pupil is pregnant or has recently given birth, the school will consider their educational, pastoral, health and safeguarding needs and make appropriate arrangements to support continued access to education.

Where a member of staff is pregnant, has recently given birth or is on maternity leave, the school will comply with its legal obligations and will seek to provide appropriate support throughout pregnancy, maternity leave and the return to work.

The school will not unlawfully disadvantage a member of staff because they are pregnant, have taken or intend to take maternity leave, or are exercising rights associated with pregnancy or maternity.

Relevant arrangements, including maternity leave, return to work, risk assessments, reasonable adjustments and any applicable flexible working arrangements, will be managed in accordance with the school's Staff Policies and applicable employment law.

12. Marriage and Civil Partnership

The school will comply with the Equality Act 2010 in relation to marriage and civil partnership.

This protected characteristic primarily applies to employment and does not apply to pupils in the same way as the other protected characteristics.

The school will not unlawfully discriminate against staff or prospective employees on the basis of marriage or civil partnership. Employment decisions will be based on relevant and objective criteria.

13. Age

The protected characteristic of age applies primarily in relation to employment.

The school will ensure that employment decisions concerning staff are made lawfully and without unlawful age discrimination.

The school will seek to ensure that age is not used as an inappropriate or unjustified barrier to recruitment, training, development, promotion or other employment opportunities. Where age-related requirements are necessary, these will be based on legitimate and lawful requirements of the role.

14. Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

The school recognises that discrimination can take many forms, including:

- direct discrimination;
- indirect discrimination;
- harassment;
- victimisation;
- bullying;
- discriminatory language;
- stereotyping;
- exclusion;
- online abuse;
- hate-related behaviour; and
- discriminatory or prejudicial behaviour between pupils.

These behaviours may affect pupils, staff, prospective employees, parents/carers or other members of the school community.

Such behaviour may take place during online lessons, through school platforms, private messaging, social media, gaming platforms or other digital environments.

For staff, such behaviour may also occur through workplace communications, meetings, email, messaging platforms, recruitment processes or other work-related environments.

The school will respond proportionately and appropriately to all concerns.

Where behaviour may constitute a safeguarding concern, staff must report it to the DSL or deputy DSL in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Where concerns relate to staff conduct or workplace behaviour, they will also be managed through the appropriate staff policies and procedures i.e. Whistleblowing Policy and Complaints.

15. Child-on-Child Discriminatory Behaviour

The school recognises that children can abuse other children and that discriminatory behaviour can form part of child-on-child abuse.

This may include racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, misandry or other prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour.

Staff should not dismiss harmful behaviour as "banter", joking or normal disagreement where it causes or has the potential to cause harm.

Concerns should be reported to the DSL or deputy DSL and will be considered alongside the school's **Safeguarding, Behaviour** and **Anti-Bullying** policies, accessible via the TOS Policies page on our website.

16. Staff Responsibilities

All staff associated with The Online School UK are expected to:

- treat pupils, colleagues and parents/carers with dignity and respect;
- challenge inappropriate discriminatory language and behaviour;
- promote an inclusive learning environment;
- identify and report concerns about discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- make reasonable adjustments where they have been identified as necessary and appropriate;
- follow the school's safeguarding procedures where discriminatory behaviour raises safeguarding concerns; and
- undertake relevant training provided by the school.

Staff are also expected to contribute to an inclusive working environment by:

- treating colleagues and other members of the school community fairly and respectfully;
- avoiding discriminatory, harassing or victimising behaviour;
- supporting reasonable adjustments where these have been identified as appropriate;
- raising concerns about discriminatory behaviour through the appropriate channels; and
- maintaining appropriate professional boundaries in all online and digital communications.

Staff must not express personal views or behave in a manner that discriminates against or humiliates pupils or colleagues.

17. Curriculum and Teaching

The school will seek to provide a curriculum that:

- reflects the diversity of society;
- promotes respect and tolerance;
- challenges inappropriate stereotypes and prejudice;
- supports pupils to understand different perspectives;
- promotes positive relationships; and
- prepares pupils for life in a diverse society.

Curriculum content will be age-appropriate and consistent with statutory requirements.

Teachers should consider accessibility and the diverse needs of pupils when planning and delivering online learning.

18. Recruitment and Employment

The school will seek to ensure that recruitment, selection, promotion, training, performance management and other employment practices are fair and lawful.

The school will not unlawfully discriminate against staff or applicants because of a protected characteristic.

Recruitment decisions will be based on relevant skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the role.

The school will seek to ensure that recruitment processes are accessible and inclusive and that applicants are assessed consistently against relevant criteria. The school will consider reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and will seek to remove unnecessary barriers within the recruitment process.

Equality and inclusion will be considered throughout recruitment, including job advertising, shortlisting, interviews, selection activities and appointment decisions.

The school will ensure that equality and inclusion considerations operate alongside, and do not reduce or replace, the school's safeguarding and safer recruitment requirements. All relevant safer recruitment checks and procedures will be applied consistently in accordance with the school's Safer Recruitment Policy.

The school will also seek to promote equality of opportunity in relation to induction, training, professional development, promotion, performance management and other employment opportunities.

The school's Safer Recruitment Policy and Staff Code of Conduct should be read alongside this policy.

19. Complaints and Concerns

Pupils, parents/carers and staff are encouraged to raise concerns where they believe discrimination, harassment, bullying or unfair treatment has occurred.

Prospective employees and other members of the school community may also raise concerns where they believe they have experienced unlawful discrimination or unfair treatment in relation to the school.

Concerns should be reported to an appropriate member of staff or senior leader.

Staff may also raise workplace concerns through the school's Grievance Policy or Whistleblowing Procedure, found on our TOS policies section on our website.

Where a concern relates to safeguarding, it must be reported to the DSL or deputy DSL.

Formal complaints will be handled in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

20. Monitoring and Review

The school will monitor equality-related incidents, complaints and relevant patterns to identify areas requiring further action.

Where appropriate, the school will consider whether particular groups of pupils are experiencing barriers to participation, achievement or wellbeing.

The school will also consider whether staff or prospective employees may be experiencing barriers, disadvantage or unequal treatment in relation to recruitment, employment, development or participation in the working environment.

Where appropriate and lawful, the school may monitor relevant equality information to identify patterns of disadvantage, discrimination or under-representation and to inform appropriate action. Any monitoring will be undertaken in accordance with applicable data protection and confidentiality requirements.

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed regularly by the school leadership team and updated where necessary to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance or the needs of the school community.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND and Accessibility Policy/Accessibility Plan
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Disciplinary Policy
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Online Safety Policy

- Filtering and Monitoring Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment Policy