Our Rock Academy

Equality Policy

" A nurturing, ambitious and inclusive school where every child feels known, valued and connected."

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Date	Revisions

Resilience, Ownership, Creativity and Kindness

Policy statement

At Our Rock Academy, equality is part of how we create a safe, nurturing and ambitious specialist learning environment. Every pupil should be able to participate, learn and belong without unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation. We recognise that pupils may experience barriers linked to disability, communication, sensory processing, emotional regulation, previous experiences and other aspects of identity. We respond through high expectations, positive relationships, reasonable adjustments and carefully planned support.

Our approach reflects Our Rock values. Resilience means supporting pupils to overcome barriers without lowering ambition. Ownership means making fair, evidence-informed decisions and acting when outcomes are unequal. Creativity means adapting teaching, communication and the environment. Kindness means treating each person with dignity and respect.

The Proprietor and Headteacher are committed to ensuring that equality considerations are built into leadership, curriculum, admissions, employment, behaviour, safeguarding, accessibility and day-to-day decision-making.

Purpose

This policy explains how Our Rock Academy will:

- Prevent and respond to unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Make reasonable adjustments and reduce barriers for disabled pupils, staff, parents, carers and visitors;
- Promote equality of opportunity and participation;
- Foster respectful relationships between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not;
- Consider equality when policies, provision and significant decisions are developed or reviewed; and
- Set, monitor and review measurable equality objectives.

School context

Our Rock Academy is a specialist independent school for pupils with Autism and SEND, as well as Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Many pupils require personalised approaches to communication, regulation, learning and participation. Equality at Our Rock therefore includes

removing avoidable barriers while maintaining consistently high expectations for learning, conduct, safety and preparation for adulthood.

Legal framework and guidance

This policy has been prepared with regard to the current legal and regulatory framework in England, including:

- The Equality Act 2010, including the school education provisions, employment provisions and the duty to make reasonable adjustments;
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Department for Education independent school standards guidance updated April 2026;
- Department for Education guidance Equality Act 2010 advice for schools;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical guidance for schools in England, last updated September 2025;
- Ofsted guidance Equality duties on education inspection, published November 2025;
- The Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years where applicable;
- Data protection legislation, including the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, when equality information is collected, analysed or published.

The Equality Act applies to independent schools. The Proprietor is the responsible body for Our Rock Academy. The school must not unlawfully discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or prospective pupil in admissions, education, access to benefits facilities or services, exclusion or any other detriment.

The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to listed public authorities and to other organisations when they are carrying out a public function. It does not automatically apply to every activity of every independent school. Our Rock adopts the three aims of the duty as a framework for good practice. Where the duty or the related specific publication duties apply to a function carried out by the school, the Proprietor will ensure those requirements are met.

Current law and guidance in areas relating to sex and gender reassignment continue to develop. The school will follow the Equality Act, safeguarding requirements and current authoritative guidance, consider the rights and needs of all affected pupils, and keep relevant arrangements under review.

Protected characteristics

The protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The way the Act applies differs by context. In relation to pupils, the school provisions do not apply to age or marriage and civil partnership in the same way as the other characteristics. These characteristics remain relevant to employment and to the respectful culture we expect across the school community.

Roles and responsibilities

The Proprietor

The Proprietor holds overall responsibility for equality governance and will:

- Ensure the school meets its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act and relevant independent school standards;
- Approve this policy and the equality objectives and review them at the stated intervals;
- Receive at least annual assurance on equality information, progress against objectives, complaints, incidents, reasonable adjustments and emerging risks;
- Provide strategic challenge and ensure that sufficient resources, training and leadership capacity are available; and
- Ensure equality is considered in significant strategic decisions.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for implementation and will:

- Promote an inclusive culture in which the Our Rock values and high expectations apply to everyone;
- Ensure policies and procedures are applied fairly, consistently and with appropriate reasonable adjustments;
- Ensure equality information is reviewed and reported to the Proprietor;

- Monitor progress against the equality objectives and arrange corrective action where needed;
- Ensure staff receive appropriate induction, training and support; and
- Seek specialist or legal advice where a complex equality issue arises.

Staff

All staff must:

- Treat pupils, colleagues, families and visitors with dignity and respect;
- Challenge discriminatory language, bullying, harassment and stereotypes in a calm and proportionate way;
- Apply agreed reasonable adjustments and personalised strategies consistently;
- Report equality concerns and record incidents accurately;
- Consider how teaching, resources, routines and communication may create or remove barriers; and
- Complete required equality, SEND, safeguarding and behaviour training.

Pupils parents and carers

Pupils are supported to be safe, respectful and ready to learn. They are expected to respect difference, avoid discriminatory language or conduct and seek help when they experience or witness unfair treatment. Parents and carers are encouraged to share relevant needs, request reasonable adjustments and raise concerns promptly so that the school can respond.

Eliminating discrimination harassment and victimisation

Our Rock Academy will take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent unlawful conduct and to respond when concerns arise. The school will:

- Use clear admissions, employment, behaviour, safeguarding and complaints procedures;
- Teach and model respectful language and relationships;
- Record and review discriminatory or prejudiced incidents, including racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and religion-based language or conduct;

- Consider whether behaviour may be connected to disability, communication need, distress, trauma or an unmet need without excusing harm to others;
- Respond to incidents in a way that is fair, restorative where appropriate and focused on safety, learning and preventing recurrence;
- Protect people from victimisation after raising or supporting a concern; and
- Take disciplinary or other action where this is justified, proportionate and consistent with relevant policies.

Reasonable adjustments and accessibility

The school has an anticipatory duty to consider reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. Needs will be identified through the admissions process, education health and care plans where applicable, professional advice, family and pupil views, observation and ongoing review.

Adjustments may include changes to teaching, communication, routines, sensory demands, assessment, technology, staffing, timetabling, educational visits, information formats or the physical environment. Decisions will consider effectiveness, practicality, cost, available resources, safety, the impact on others and the need to maintain educational standards. The school will not charge a disabled pupil for a reasonable adjustment.

Where a requested adjustment cannot be provided, the decision and reasons will be recorded, alternatives will be considered and the family will be informed. Accessibility priorities and known limitations of the physical environment are addressed in the Accessibility Plan and through individual risk assessment where necessary.

Advancing equality of opportunity

Our Rock Academy will work to remove or reduce disadvantage, meet different needs and encourage participation. This includes:

- Personalised learning and support informed by each pupil's profile, strengths and needs;
- Adaptive teaching and accessible methods for demonstrating learning;
- Fair access to curriculum subjects, enrichment, educational visits, careers education and preparation for adulthood;
- Monitoring whether groups experience different patterns in attendance, engagement, achievement, behaviour, suspensions, restrictive intervention, bullying or participation;

- Working with pupils, families, local authorities and professionals to understand and reduce barriers; and
- Using positive action where lawful and proportionate to address disadvantage or under-representation.

Fostering good relations

The school will promote understanding and respect through the taught curriculum, personal social health and economic education, relationships and sex education, assemblies, reading materials, pupil voice, restorative practice and day-to-day relationships. Teaching will be age appropriate, impartial and sensitive to pupils' developmental and communication needs.

Curriculum planning and resources will reflect a range of people, families, cultures, faiths, beliefs, identities, abilities and experiences without tokenism or stereotype. Staff will create structured opportunities for pupils to listen to different viewpoints, discuss disagreement safely and understand the protected characteristics in ways that support respect for all people.

Equality in decision making

Equality considerations must be taken into account before and at the time significant decisions are made, not added after a decision has been reached. The depth of analysis will be proportionate to the likely impact.

For significant policies, changes to provision, site development, curriculum decisions, admissions arrangements, staffing proposals, educational visits and other material decisions, the decision-maker will consider:

- Who may be affected and what evidence or lived experience is available;
- Whether the proposal may create a particular disadvantage;
- What reasonable adjustments or less disadvantageous alternatives are available;
- How the decision supports equality of opportunity and good relations;
- How different rights, safeguarding needs and operational constraints will be balanced; and
- How impact will be monitored after implementation.

A written equality impact record will be kept where the decision is likely to have a material effect on pupils, staff or families. The record may be incorporated into the relevant policy review, risk assessment, proposal or meeting minutes.

Equality information and data protection

The school will use relevant and proportionate information to understand its community and identify possible inequality. Information may include admissions, attendance, achievement, participation, behaviour, suspensions, bullying and discriminatory incidents, restrictive interventions, complaints, reasonable adjustments, pupil and family views and workforce information.

Equality information will be collected and used lawfully, fairly and transparently. Access will be limited to those who need it. Published information will be aggregated and anonymised. Because Our Rock is a small specialist school, information will be suppressed or described narratively where publication could identify an individual or produce unreliable conclusions.

Raising concerns

A pupil, parent, carer, member of staff or visitor who believes they have experienced or witnessed discrimination, harassment or victimisation should raise the concern with a member of staff or the Headteacher. Concerns will be taken seriously, recorded and considered under the most appropriate school procedure.

Complaints may be made through the Complaints Policy. Staff concerns may also be raised through the grievance or whistleblowing arrangements. Raising a concern in good faith will not result in less favourable treatment. Nothing in this policy prevents a person from seeking independent advice or using a statutory complaint or legal route.

Personalised access and reasonable adjustments

What we will do. Ensure that every pupil with an identified disability or access need has an agreed record of reasonable adjustments and personalised access strategies.

How we will do it. The school will record identified needs and agreed adjustments as part of the admissions process and whenever a new need emerges. Staff will check implementation termly in line with termly attainment and wellbeing review and/or after any significant change.

Equal participation and outcomes

What we will do. Establish a reliable equality baseline and use it to identify and reduce avoidable gaps in participation, attendance, engagement, achievement and behaviour outcomes.

How we will do it. The school will review relevant information termly to identify any meaningful differences in participation or outcomes. Where a concern is identified, leaders will consider the causes, agree proportionate action and review whether the action is making a difference.

Inclusive curriculum and school culture

What we will do. Ensure that curriculum plans and resources promote respect for protected characteristics and represent a broad range of people, families, cultures, abilities and experiences.

How we will do it. The school will audit curriculum plans and resources annually. Curriculum leaders will identify inclusive content and any improvements needed, while accessible pupil voice will be used to check that pupils know how to seek help about discriminatory behaviour.

Confident and accountable staff practice

What we will do. Build consistent staff understanding of the Equality Act, reasonable adjustments, discriminatory incidents and inclusive communication.

How we will do it. Equality responsibilities will be included in staff induction and refreshed annually. The Proprietor and relevant leaders will receive role-specific development. Training records, supervision and checks of understanding will be used to identify and address any further support needs.

Accessible family communication

What we will do. Make school information and participation accessible to parents and carers with identified communication or access needs.

How we will do it. The school will record communication preferences as part of the admissions process and review them when needs change. Requests for alternative formats or communication adjustments will be considered, with an appropriate format or practical alternative agreed wherever reasonably possible.

Monitoring review and publication

The Headteacher will monitor implementation and report to the Proprietor at least annually. The report will consider progress against the objectives, relevant equality information, reasonable adjustments, discriminatory incidents, complaints, training and any emerging risks.

This policy will be reviewed annually and after any significant change in legislation, guidance, school circumstances or identified risk. The Proprietor will approve material revisions. Equality objectives will be reviewed and republished at least every four years where the specific publication duty applies and, as an Our Rock commitment, in any event.

Where Our Rock is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty specific publication requirements, proportionate equality information will be updated at least annually and objectives will be published and reviewed at least every four years. The school may also publish appropriate information voluntarily, subject to confidentiality and data protection.