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Equal Opportunities Policy

Including RWS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Aims

“Through recognising and addressing the unique spirit of each child, we aim to inspire in our pupils a capacity and enthusiasm to work arising out of respect and care for the many wonders of the world, for fellow human beings and for oneself.” Rudolf Steiner

1. RWS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Aims

1.1 Ringwood Waldorf School embraces inclusive practices and holistic education underpinned by the pedagogical principles of Rudolf Steiner. We are a community-oriented school, and strive to create a welcoming and supportive environment for all students, families, and staff, where each child's unique journey is supported and celebrated. We strongly believe that by supporting diversity and equitable opportunities in our school, we prepare our students for a diverse modern world – a global community that sees itself reflected in each of our students and is all the more resilient because of them.

1.2 Our curriculum aligns with child developmental stages, with stories and activities tailored for each class. Teachers actively engage with students, supporting them to embrace their strengths and maintain a love for learning. We work together to review and update our curriculum and resources to reflect the breadth of our community. Students complete self-chosen projects in classes 8 and 12, providing opportunities to share and develop their individual passions.

1.3 We aim to establish long-term connections with families, fostering a sense of belonging and commitment to the school. We promote respect for others and a shared sense of humanity. Time is dedicated to adult involvement, including individual meetings with parents and caregivers, Community Group, and events that allow families to experience our educational approach. We highly value parent input and actively seek feedback.

1.4 We celebrate a range of festivals reflecting the culture of our community. We encourage families to share aspects of their culture or religion, enriching school life and promoting inclusion.

1.5 We value, respect, and promote inclusive practice to support children, teachers, and families. We value people of different abilities, gender, sexual orientation, belief, ethnicity, and culture. Ringwood Waldorf School does not discriminate in its employment policies, educational policies, admissions policies and other school policies. Our Diversity Lead and Diversity Trustee work to promote a culture of inclusion.

Introduction to this Policy

2.1 This policy has been prepared in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

2.2 The policy relates to pupils, staff (including volunteers) and others using the school's facilities.

2.3 The 'protected characteristics' referred to in this policy apply to the following (in line with the Equality Act 2010):

- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Religion and belief
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership.

How these specifically apply in each instance will vary, depending upon the context, and whether it is concerning pupils, staff or those using the school's facilities. Proportionality and due regard will apply when giving consideration to what is required.

2.4 For pupils, staff and others using the school facilities, the school is committed to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010;
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.5 The school is committed to giving all pupils every opportunity to achieve the highest standards by:

- taking account of their varied experiences and needs;
- offering a broad and balanced curriculum;
- having high expectations of all pupils.

2.6 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Ringwood Waldorf School policies:

- SEND Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Relational Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- PSHE Curriculum Policy
- RWS Curriculum

3. Policy Aims and Objectives

3.1 The school does not unlawfully discriminate against anyone, whether pupil, parent, staff, volunteer or visitor, on the grounds of, or related to, any of the protected characteristics (detailed in section 1.3).

3.2 The school promotes the principles of fairness and justice for all through the education that it provides in the school.

3.3 The school seeks to ensure that, wherever possible, all pupils have equal access to the full range of educational opportunities provided by the schools.

3.4 The school strives to constantly identify and remove any forms of indirect discrimination that may form barriers to learning for some groups by regularly assessing the impact of its policies and practices.

3.5 The school ensures that recruitment, employment, promotion and development opportunities are open to all.

3.6 The school challenges personal prejudice and stereotypical views whenever they occur. The school is aware that prejudice and stereotyping can be caused by misconception and by ignorance. Through positive educational experiences, and support for each individual's point of view, the school aims to promote positive social attitudes and respect for all.

3.7 The school values each pupil's worth, celebrating both people's individuality and the diversity of the community centred on the school and shows the utmost respect for everyone.

3.8 The school and its staff strive to be proactive in tackling prejudice and unlawful discrimination.

4. Equal Opportunities in Recruitment

4.1 The school will ensure that no job applicant or employee is discriminated against on the grounds of the protected characteristics and will proactively monitor and review this over time and make changes where required to address any imbalance.

4.2 Recruitment and selection procedures and practices are regularly reviewed to ensure that no individual is put at a disadvantage either directly or indirectly, paying particular attention to the protected characteristics.

5. Equal Opportunities in the Curriculum

5.1 Every pupil has an equal entitlement to all areas of the curriculum, regardless of language, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity, or gender dysphoria.

5.2 Pupils should have equal access to the curriculum regardless of academic ability. Consequently this policy should be read in conjunction with the Special Educational Needs Policy. Please note, as an independent school, RWS is not obliged to enrol pupils who have SEN or ECHP.

5.3 Staff will actively encourage the breaking down of any traditional gender stereotyping regarding subject choices.

5.4 The school will monitor any careers advice or work experience placements provided by outside agencies to aim to ensure equal opportunities

5.5 All forms of individual and subject support, guidance, amenities and facilities, including extra-curricular activities, will be equally available to all pupils, with particular attention given to equality of opportunity across the protected characteristics. The schools will establish monitoring arrangements in relation to the protected characteristics and how they apply to these activities, to determine whether improvements may be necessary.

5.6 Behavioural expectations and disciplinary sanctions will be free of any bias in relation to the protected characteristics.

5.7 Teachers will assess all materials and resources used for teaching and take appropriate action whenever possible to ensure that they reflect concepts, themes and information which seeks to address stereotypes in relation to the protected characteristics, and remove discrimination. Teachers will try to ensure that all pupils feel that their language and culture is both acknowledged and valued.

6. Race

6.1 The term 'Race' refers to a person's ethnicity, race, nationality or national origin.

6.2 The school will:

- strive to eliminate all forms of racism and racial discrimination;

- promote equality of opportunity;
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

6.3 The school will not tolerate any form of racism or racist behaviour. Should a racist incident occur, it will be dealt with in accordance with school procedures.

6.4 The school endeavours to be welcoming to all minority groups. The celebration and understanding of cultural diversity is promoted through the topics studied by the pupils and is reflected in displays, resources and events.

6.5 Cultural diversity and respect for others are celebrated and reflected across the whole curriculum. The curriculum will enhance pupils' understanding of British, European and world society and history, including the contributions of minority ethnic groups. Parents are encouraged to participate in cultural festivals and events and share knowledge about their cultural history and heritage.

6.6 The school will give pupils the understanding they need to recognise prejudice and reject racial discrimination.

7. Gender

7.1 The school will constantly examine its curriculum, procedures and materials for gender bias or inequality.

7.2 The school will encourage pupils to be aware of the rigid sexual stereotypes presented by, for example, the media, and will try to ensure that resources include non-sexist books which value the achievements of both women and men.

7.3 The school is committed to providing a curriculum which avoids unnecessary historical gender divisions. The schools will endeavour to provide all pupils with experience in subjects traditionally considered to be suitable for a single sex e.g. cooking, woodwork, etc.

7.4 The schools aims to ensure:

- that teachers allocate their time fairly between the sexes;
- that all pupils have opportunities for working with pupils of both sexes;
- that the traditional sexual stereotypes are broken down (for example by not asking boys to move furniture whilst girls tidy up);
- that pupils have opportunities for examining their own preconceived ideas of gender roles.

7.5 The school recognises the right of students to be identified as other to their birth gender.

8. Disability

8.1 The term disability applies to a person when:

- they have a physical or mental impairment;
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities

For the purposes of the Equality Act, these words have the following meaning:

- 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial.
- 'long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions).
- 'normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

8.2 The school is committed to meeting the needs of pupils with disabilities, as it is to meeting the needs of all within the school. The school endeavours to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which specifies due regard should be given to consider the barriers that may exist to a pupil's access to education and how to remove them. All reasonable steps will therefore be taken to ensure that disabled pupils are not placed at any disadvantage compared to non-disabled children. The Equality Act also determines that where significant disadvantage exists, disabled people will be treated more favourably to address the imbalance. This will be taken into account when considering any necessary improvements.

8.3 The school is committed to providing an environment that allows disabled pupils full access to all areas of learning or associated services provided for, or offered to, pupils at the schools, including educational visits.

8.4 Teachers will modify teaching and learning as appropriate for pupils with disabilities. For example, they may give additional time to complete certain activities or modify teaching materials or offer alternative activities where pupils are unable to manipulate tools or equipment.

9. Religion and Belief

9.1 The school respects the religious beliefs and practices of all staff, pupils, parents, volunteers and visitors and will comply with all reasonable requests relating to the accommodation of a recognised religion or belief's observance and practice.

10. Sexual Orientation

10.1 The school will make no assumption about the sexual orientation of any of the members of its community, including its pupils, teaching staff, volunteers or those who use the schools facilities.

10.2 In the curriculum, sexuality is taught within the context of loving relationships. Whilst heterosexual relationships are the most common in our society, we acknowledge that some pupils may have or develop a homosexual, bisexual or other orientation and that during development many will be still questioning their sexual orientation. Pupils' questions will be answered as they arise, honestly, factually and non-judgmentally.

10.3 Derogatory name-calling of any sort is unacceptable under any circumstances. Matters arising in relation to name calling which relates to a pupil's sexuality or perceived sexuality will be taken seriously and action taken where necessary to remove this behaviour from the school environment.

11. Pregnancy and Maternity

11.1 The school will be supportive of pupils who become pregnant and will make reasonable and appropriate arrangements to assist them to continue with their education.

11.2 As well as normal practice arrangements in terms of maternity leave and employment protection, staff who become pregnant will be supported through pregnancy and maternity leave, with reasonable adjustments made where appropriate and necessary.

11.3 Staff who have a pregnancy that ends will be supported through that process, for instance, by being offered compassionate leave.

11.4 Staff who have a baby born prematurely or with health issues will be supported through that process.

12. Marriage and Civil Partnership

12.1 The school will ensure that equality of opportunity is provided for people applying for positions at the schools, regardless of their marital or civil partnership status.

12.2 Respect and dignity towards children whose parents who are in a civil partnership will be upheld by pupils, teachers and other school staff and volunteers.

12.3 Parents of pupils who are in a civil partnership will be treated with dignity and respect.

13. Gender Reassignment

13.1 The school will be supportive of any young person undergoing gender reassignment and will support them to continue effectively with their education during that process.

13.2 The school will ensure that learners undergoing gender reassignment are protected from bullying or harassment relating to this and will work with the young person and their parents/guardians to manage this, including how, what and when to inform other learners and the approach taken.

14. Age

14.1 The school will put procedures in place to ensure that no-one is denied a job, an equal chance of training or promotion or suffers from harassment or victimisation because of their age.

15. Bullying (to be read in conjunction with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy)

15.1 The school is committed to identifying and tackling all forms of bullying, which can have a significant negative impact upon a pupil's well-being and academic achievement.

15.2 The school will take 'identity based' bullying relating to the protected characteristics particularly seriously, where a staff or pupil's identity or perceived identity is being used as the basis for the bullying.

15.3 The school will address and take seriously cases of 'cyberbullying', whereby bullying occurs through the use of information and communication technology, in particular, through the use of social media, such as Facebook, twitter, or other social networking websites or text messaging. Where content is considered to be illegal, the Police will be informed.

15.4 Staff, pupils and parents will be encouraged and supported to report all incidents of bullying and cyberbullying, whether toward pupils or staff/volunteers.

16. The role of Trustees

16.1 The Board of Trustees (BoT) has responsibility for the duties which arise in relation to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010..

16.2 In this policy statement the BoT has set out its commitment to equal opportunities and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that all members of the school community are treated both fairly and equally.

16.3 The BoT will ensure that no-one is unlawfully discriminated against whilst in the school on account of the protected characteristics.

17. The role of the SLT and SMT

17.1 The School Leadership Team (SLT) will ensure that the school's policy on equal opportunities is implemented, and is supported by the School Management Team (SMT) and BoT in so doing.

17.2 Members of the SLT and SMT will set aside their own prejudices and ensure that all pupils, fellow colleagues and those using the schools facilities are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

17.3 The SLT and SMT will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the school's policy on equal opportunities and that teachers apply these guidelines fairly in all situations.

17.4 The SLT and SMT will promote the principles of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum and in providing opportunities for training.

17.5 The SLT and SMT will promote respect for other people in all aspects of school life; in assemblies, for example, respect for other people will be a regular theme as it will also be in displays around the school.

17.6 The SLT and SMT will view all incidents of unfair treatment with due concern.

18. The role of teachers

18.1 Class teachers will set aside their own prejudices and ensure that all pupils, colleagues and those using the school's facilities are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

18.2 The school will address both direct and indirect discrimination against any child/young person, parent or visitor and will actively seek to identify and remove it. Ignorance of what constitutes discrimination is not lawful protection against an allegation and will therefore not be considered a defence.

18.3 When designing schemes of work, teachers will pay regard to this equal opportunities policy, both in the choice of topics to study and in how to approach sensitive issues. For example, history topics should include examples of the significant contribution made by women; in geography, attempts should be made to counter stereotypical images of Africa and Asia for example and to show the true diversity of development in different parts of the world.

18.4 All teachers and support staff will challenge any incidents of discrimination and draw them to the attention of the school management team.

19. The role of pupils

19.1 Pupils will be made aware of this policy and will be encouraged and supported to draw any incidents of discrimination to the attention of the class teacher or other member of staff.

20. The role of parents

20.1 Parents will be made aware of this policy through the school website and will be encouraged and supported to draw any incidents of discrimination to the attention of the class teacher or member of SMT

21. The role of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Group

21.1 An inclusive diversity group consisting of staff, parents and caregivers meets termly to address issues, research resources, and bring new initiatives.

21.2 The EDI Group provides updates through teachers' meetings and the school newsletter, ensuring our whole community is involved. The group strives for honest communication and authentic listening to support our collaborative work and inner self-reflection.

21.3 The school acknowledges the need for more discussion around questions such as representation and underrepresentation, working through implicit biases, being open to new perspectives, and widening the breadth of our curriculum.

22. Dealing with allegations made

22.1 The school will take all allegations of discrimination very seriously, and will commit to investigating them properly and fairly. The outcome of any investigation will be determined under the school's disciplinary procedures. The school will also foster a 'safe environment' where pupils or parents can feel confident to raise these issues, and be fully supported and protected throughout the procedures which may follow.

22.2 The school will take 'false allegations' of discrimination seriously, and this will be dealt with in the appropriate manner by the school under its disciplinary procedures. It is hoped that this will be rare and will normally only be determined following a fair and thorough investigation.

23. The role of volunteers and visitors / contractors

23.1 All volunteers, visitors and contractors are required to adhere to the school's policy.

24. Monitoring / Review

24.1 The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy. The trustees will therefore:

- monitor the progress of pupils from minority groups, comparing it to the progress made by other pupils in the school;
- monitor the staff appointment process so that no-one applying for a post at the school is discriminated against;
- require the SMT to report to governors annually on the effectiveness of this policy in conjunction with its reporting in relation to the Accessibility Plan for the school;
- take into serious consideration any complaints from pupils, parents, staff or visitors regarding equal opportunity;
- monitor the school's pupil behaviour policy, and the number of exclusions, to make sure that pupils from minority groups are not unfairly treated.

24.2 This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if it is considered necessary.

25. Links to other Policies

SEND Policy

Accessibility Plan

Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

Relational Behaviour Management Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

PSHE Curriculum Policy