

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Staff)

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1. Introduction to policy

The Mill Hill School Foundation

Cobham Hall School is one of The Mill Hill School Foundation's (the 'Foundation') schools. The Foundation comprises seven independent mainstream Schools which together educate girls and boys aged 3 to 18 years, namely the day schools of Grimsdell, Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School and Belmont, Mill Hill Preparatory School, Keble Prep, Lyonsdown and the boarding and day senior schools of Mill Hill School, Mill Hill International and Cobham Hall. The Foundation is a registered charity with a Christian ethos and welcomes staff, workers, volunteers, pupils, parents, applicants and governors from all different social and economic backgrounds, ethnicities and linguistic, religious and cultural traditions.

Foundation's position

This policy applies to the Mill Hill Schools Foundation (the Foundation) schools (as above).

Individuals with different cultures, perspectives and experiences are at the heart of the way The Foundation works. Prejudice of any kind has no place in our schools, and we will continue to work as hard as is needed to ensure that this is so. The Foundation values a diverse and inclusive community for pupils and employees as we believe diversity and inclusion improve the learning environment for everyone.

We want to recruit, develop and retain the most talented people, regardless of their background (with reference the characteristics of sex, gender reassignment, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, which are protected in law), and make best use of their talents.

We seek to develop a work environment where we treat all staff as individuals, fairly and in a consistent way. We work within the spirit and the practice of the Equality Act 2010 by promoting a culture of respect and dignity and will actively challenge discrimination, should it ever arise. We will remove unnecessary barriers for individuals seeking opportunities through recruitment, training and development, promotion and career planning.

The Executive team, supported by the Court of Governors have overall responsibility to manage the implementation of equality, good relations, diversity and inclusion across the Foundation, and to comply with the relevant education and employment legislation and anti-discrimination, human rights and equality legislation that affect its statutory duties in relation to the schools within the Foundation. Being a committed equal opportunities organisation, the Foundation will take every possible step to promote inclusion, and to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly, and to pro-actively tackle and eliminate discrimination. All policies and practices will conform with the principle of equal opportunities in terms of recruitment, selection, training, promotion, career development, discipline, redundancy and dismissal.

Purpose

This policy sets out the Foundation's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion with regards its' staff. The Foundation is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and promoting a culture that actively values difference and recognises that people from different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work.

2. Application

This policy applies to the Foundation's employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, to ex-employees, to job applicants and to individuals such as agency staff, consultants, volunteers and Governors who are not Foundation employees, but who work, volunteer or attend at the Foundation (collectively workers).

Every individual has personal responsibility for the application of this policy, and has a duty to act in accordance with this policy, to treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against, harass or victimise other members of staff. In some situations, the Foundation may be at risk of being held responsible for the acts of individual members of staff and will not tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour.

This policy applies to all conduct in the workplace and also to conduct outside of the workplace that is related to work (e.g. at meetings, social events and social interactions with colleagues) or which may impact on the Foundation's reputation (e.g. the expression of views on social media, contrary to the commitments expressed in this policy, that could be linked to the Foundation).

3. Personnel responsible

Those in leadership have a specific responsibility to set appropriate standards of behaviour, to lead by example and to ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the aims and objectives of the Foundation with regard to equality and diversity. To facilitate this process, managers may be given training on equality, diversity and inclusivity awareness and corresponding recruitment and selection best practice.

All members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. If any member of staff has any questions about the content or application of this policy, they should contact the HR Manager or the Director of Finance and Resources (DFR).

This policy is of particular relevance to the senior leadership, line managers and other staff concerned with recruitment, training and promotion procedures and employment/management decisions which affect others.

4. Forms of discrimination

Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

- a. Direct discrimination. Direct discrimination occurs where:
 - i. Someone is treated less favourably because of one or more Protected Characteristics. For example, rejecting an applicant because they would not "fit in" because of their race or sexual orientation would be direct discrimination.
 - ii. Someone is less favourably treated because of their association with someone who has a Protected Characteristic. For example, an employee may be treated less favourably because they have a disabled child.
 - iii. Someone is treated less favourably because they are perceived to have a Protected Characteristic. For example, an employee may be treated less favourably because they are believed to be (but may not actually be) homosexual.
- b. Indirect discrimination. Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to a provision, criterion or practice, applied to a group of people, which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of a Protected Characteristic, and it cannot be objectively justified. An example might be a minimum height requirement for a job. This is likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If this criterion cannot be objectively justified, because it is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, then it will be indirectly discriminatory on the ground of sex.
- c. Victimisation and harassment. Discrimination also includes victimisation (suffering a detriment because of action the employee has taken or may take to assert legal rights against discrimination or to assist a colleague in that regard (called a Protected Act)) and harassment (see the Foundation's Dignity at Work policy for a more detailed explanation of "harassment").

5. Recruitment and selection

The Foundation aims to ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment because of a Protected Characteristic. Recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and that sufficiently diverse sectors of the community are reached. Job selection criteria are reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.

6. Staff training and promotion and conditions of service

Staff training needs shall be identified through regular staff appraisals. All members of staff will be given an equal opportunity regarding access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation.

All promotion decisions shall be made on the basis of merit, and promotion opportunities will be offered reflecting equality of opportunity at all levels.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are available to all workers who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

7. Disability discrimination

Informing the Foundation. If a member of staff is disabled, or becomes disabled in the course of their employment, they are encouraged to tell the Foundation about their condition. This is to enable the Foundation to support the member of staff as much as possible and to ensure that they are not treated less favourably because of something related to their disability.

Reasonable adjustments. A member of staff may also wish to advise their Line Manager, or HR Manager or DFR of any reasonable adjustments to their working conditions or the duties of their job which they consider to be necessary, or which would assist them in the performance of their duties. This may involve the provision of an additional piece of equipment or assistance in helping the member of staff to perform their work. Their Line Manager, HR Manager or DFR may wish to consult with the member of staff and with their medical adviser(s) about possible reasonable adjustments. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals and they will be accommodated where possible and proportionate to the needs of the job. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for the Foundation to accommodate the suggested adjustments and the Foundation will ensure that it provides the member of staff with information as to the basis of its decision not to make any adjustments.

Physical features. The Foundation will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether it can make any changes to help remove disadvantages which these may create for disabled users. Where possible and proportionate, the Foundation will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises. Further detail can be found in the Foundation Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan.

8. Fixed-term employees

The Foundation will monitor its use of fixed-term employees and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. It will, where relevant, monitor their progress within the Foundation to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

9. Part-time workers

The Foundation will monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. It will also ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under the Foundation's flexible working policy.

10. Agency Workers

The Foundation will monitor agency workers to ensure that they are treated no less favourably than a comparable worker in relation to accessing collective facilities and amenities at the Foundation. The Foundation will also monitor the use of temporary work agencies and, subject to the exceptions set out in the Agency Workers Regulations 2010, will ensure that all agency workers have the same basic working conditions they would have been entitled to had they been recruited by the Foundation directly into a comparable role.

11. Breaches of the policy

Complaints. If a member of staff believes that they may have been disadvantaged because of a Protected Characteristic, they are encouraged to raise the matter through the Foundation's grievance procedure. If they believe that they may have been harassed because of a Protected Characteristic, they are encouraged to raise the matter with their Line Manager, Head, HR Manager or the CEO immediately. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure.

False allegations. These procedures apply during and after termination of a member of staff's employment. Workers who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations of a breach in this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

Disciplinary action: If, after investigation, a member of staff is proven to have engaged in any unwanted conduct because of a Protected Characteristic, or otherwise acted in breach of this policy, they will be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases, such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Foundation will always take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

12. Review

This Policy shall be reviewed every two years

This Policy was approved by the Pastoral Committee of the Court of Governors in Feb 2022