



St Columba's College

Equal Opportunities Policy for Students

This policy applies across the College including Early Years, Prep and Senior Schools.

St. Columba's College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such it nurtures a holistic environment which includes a commitment to academic excellence, religious values, friendly discipline, and personal attention.

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Section 1 Introduction

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of St Columba's College ('the College'). We welcome applications from prospective pupils with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our students for today's world. We concentrate on educating the individual, and providing a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish.

Section 2 Principles

The College is committed to equal treatment for all students, regardless of any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 such as race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The aims of this policy and the College's ethos as a whole are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of the protected characteristics, save where such discrimination is permitted by law;
- Promote equality of opportunity for all members of the College community; and
- Comply with the College's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010.

St Columba's College is a Catholic School, however, the College welcomes students of all faiths and no faith. We teach our students about the importance of equality through the Pastoral Programme and encourage them to make their own commitment to the promotion of equality for all.

All members of the College community are expected to comply with this policy and the College's ethos of tolerance and respect.

Section 3 College Ethos and Code of Conduct

The Head, the College Leadership Team, pastoral staff and medical staff play an active role in monitoring the implementation of the College's policy on equal opportunities. All subjects have equality of opportunity at their core. Use is made of assemblies, the Pastoral Programme, and RE in particular, in directly underpinning the ethos of the College encapsulated in the three Cs of Courage, Courtesy and Compassion to:

- a. Promote tolerance of each other and respect for each other's position within the school community;
- b. Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues;
- c. Foster an open-minded approach and encourage students to recognise the contributions made by different cultures pointing out bias and for it to be recognised;
- d. Understand why and how we will deal with offensive language and behaviour;
- e. Understand why we will deal with any incidents promptly and in a sensitive manner.

The College recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability, whether or not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms are unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Code of Conduct and anti-bullying policies, which contain clear procedures for dealing with discriminatory behaviour.

All incidents of discrimination will be taken seriously and will be reported to the appropriate senior member of staff. Incidents which need to be reported to the police will be done so through the Schools' Police Liaison Officer.

The College's successful response to equal opportunities is based on a culture of respect for the individual, the strong and positive support from parents and guardians, and full acceptance of the College's ethos and charism, which are inclusive in nature and focus specifically on meeting the needs of all students.

Section 4 Admission

The College is an academically selective, mixed school. Our admissions process is based upon the College's selection procedure as set out in our Admissions Policy and each application will be considered on its merits in accordance with the School's published admissions criteria. All applications will also be considered in a fair and equal way in accordance with this policy.

The College accepts applications from, and admits, prospective pupils irrespective of any special educational needs (SEN) and any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 such as disability, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief).

The College welcomes applications from students with SEN and disabilities, and refers parents to the College's SEND Policy for further information and an explanation of the range and levels of support the College is able to provide.

Parents must inform the College, when submitting an application for a place, of any special circumstances relating to their child which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and/or ability to fully participate in the education provided by the College. The College will consider whether there are reasonable adjustments that can be made to the admissions and application process.

The College will not offer a place to a child with disabilities if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the College cannot adequately cater for or meet their needs.

Section 5 Educational Services

The College affords all students 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 College will not discriminate against a student on the grounds of any protected characteristic by excluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The College will:

- Treat all members of the College 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 students and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics
- Ensure that students with English as an additional language and students with an Education Health Care Plan receive necessary educational and welfare support
- Monitor the admission and progress of students from different backgrounds
- Challenge inappropriate discriminatory behaviour by students and staff

- Offer all students access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of extra-curricular activities
- Work with parents, guardians and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in the College
- Ensure that it reviews, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices
- Ensure that pupils of both sexes have equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities
- 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. Take all reasonable measures to support a current student through the process of gender transition during their time at the College.

Section 6 Administrative Responses

Where reasonably possible, access to documents and information will be adjusted to meet the needs of students, for example through the use of large print, and the provision of information in languages other than English. The College will also consider the particular needs of its learner when considering venues for teaching and learning.

Section 7 Financial Aid and Bursaries

As outlined in the College's Admissions Policy in the Bursaries and Financial Aid Policy, bursaries are means-tested awards available on occasion to those applicants who meet the College's admissions criteria but may otherwise be unable to attend the College due to financial hardship. Means-tested financial support can also be made available on occasion to those students already attending the College, for example, owing to a change in financial circumstances. Details can be found in the Bursaries and Financial Aid Policy available on the College's website or obtained from the School Office.

Section 8 Learning Needs and Disability

The College is committed to full educational inclusion and recognises its 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 College is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, it will consult with the student's parents about what reasonable adjustments, if any, the College is able to make to avoid the student being put at a substantial disadvantage. The College will carefully consider any proposals, including for equipment and services, in light of the student's disability and the resources available to the College. Further information can be found in the College's SEND policy

The College has a SEND Policy and Accessibility Plan which are available on the College's website or from the School Office. This sets out the College's plan to increase the extent to which disabled students can participate in the College's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the College 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 College; and improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Section 9 English as a Foreign Language

Students who are not native English speakers and are learning English as an additional language ('EAL') may require additional support. It is recognised that bilingual speakers have a richer language experience than their monolingual peers, and can use their skills and knowledge of one language to enhance their understanding of others. It is also acknowledged that literacy skills in one language are transferable skills, so will help literacy development in another language. Students who are not native English speakers will only be noted on the College's Learning Needs Register if they have a barrier to learning or evidence of additional needs. The process of learning a new language is not defined in legislation as a special educational need and this is reflected in College practice.

Some EAL pupils will not require language support. For those that do, the procedures and practice are set out in the English as an Additional Language Policy.

The College aims to take specific action to help students who are learning English as an additional language by developing their spoken and written English and ensuring their access to the curriculum. Whilst tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) in order to improve English language skills is not currently provided for by the College, this can be arranged privately by parents at their expense.

Section 10 School Uniform Requirements

All students at St Columba's College are required to wear a uniform until Year 12, and a strict "business dress" code operates for Years 12 and 13. The Head/Head of Prep will consider written requests from parents and students for variations in the uniform for reasons related to disability, on religious grounds and/or gender reassignment that are consistent with the College ethos, its policy on health and safety, and where it is reasonable in all the circumstances including in light of the College's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The Head/Head of Prep may take advice, and will normally arrange to meet with the parents and the student to discuss the implications of such a request.

Section 11 Monitoring and Recording

St Columba's College monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy and reports to the governors regularly on the policy's effectiveness in practice.

Section 12 Complaints Procedure

We hope that parents do not have any concerns or complaints about the operation of this policy. If parents do have any concerns, we would hope that these would be managed by mutual agreement. However, where they remain unresolved the College's Complaints Policy can be followed. A copy of the policy can be found on the College's website or requested from the School Office.

Section 13 Breach of this Policy

Pupils who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the College's Behaviour and Code of Conduct Policies.