



Victoria College Belfast

Equality and Diversity Policy

Policy Date – January 2023

Review Date – January 2026

Governor approval - 20 March 2023

Drafted by – Mrs F Cromie

Introduction

Victoria College is committed to equality and inclusion.

We recognise the value of diverse environments and strive to promote a culture in which all pupils, staff and members of the school community are welcomed and supported to fulfil their potential, irrespective of their background or personal characteristics.

We are committed to an ethos and culture of inclusion in Victoria College for all pupils, irrespective of race, religion/belief, political views, disability, SEN status, gender, gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Victoria College is an inclusive school where we focus on the well-being and progress of all our children and young people and where all members of our school community are of equal worth.

We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength that enriches our lives. We take account of differences and strive to remove any barriers to learning and development.

We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination and bullying and harassment. As a school community, we recognise the need to champion equality and ensure inclusion for all pupils in the full life of our school; where appropriate making necessary adjustments to enable everyone's participation.

Victoria College believes that education (both formal and informal learning) is fundamental to equality of opportunity. It prepares young people for life and is a powerful influence on access to and advancement in employment. All young people should be able to learn and develop fully in a truly diverse and inclusive environment.

All our policies and practices are fully inclusive and supportive of a welcoming culture for all communities; this is evidenced in our practices and procedures.

1. Equality and Inclusion

Through this policy, and the wider practices within Victoria College we seek to empower our young people to embrace diversity and challenge discrimination. We equip our Governors and staff to fulfil their legal responsibilities, ensure that our school's safeguarding procedures are comprehensive and inclusive and enable robust monitoring of our progress as a school.

Inclusion underpins all our school policies.

As part of our overall school policy development there are a number of policies that we must have in place and regularly review to ensure our school is addressing its statutory responsibilities. These include Anti-bullying Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Curriculum Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy, Uniform Policy and Admissions Policy. Any arising incident will be dealt with by the appropriate policy. There should never be any grey areas when it comes to young people's safety and well-being.

This is supplemented by a range of other policies that as a school we feel are important to have for our whole school community. It is our belief that equality and inclusion is central to **all** of our policies and that we maintain an ethos that welcomes diversity and promotes equal opportunities for all, ensuring all our pupils and their families feel valued and supported and making sure that equality and inclusion is evident in everyday school life.

2. Responsibilities

The Board of Governors have overall responsibility to:

'Promote equality, good relations and diversity and to comply with education and employment legislation and anti-discrimination, human rights and equality legislation that affect its statutory duties in relation to the school' *'Every school a good school – the Governors role'* (Department of Education NI, August 2019)

The Governors have overall responsibility to manage the implementation of equality and diversity in our school.

The **Principal** is responsible for:

- ensuring policies and procedures are in place to comply with equality legislation;
- ensuring the school implements policies and practices in line with the principles of equality and inclusion;
- following the relevant procedures and taking action in cases of unfair discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- ensuring appropriate training and awareness raising is undertaken with staff;
- ensuring that appropriate records are kept of any cases of unfair discrimination, harassment or bullying.

The **School Senior Management Team** is responsible for:

- putting the school's equality and inclusion policies and codes into practice;
- making sure that all staff know their responsibilities and receive the support and training necessary to carry them out. In respect of supporting pupils with gender identity, guidance from the Education Authority will be used <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/policies-and-guidance/supporting-transgender-young-people> ;
- following the relevant procedures and taking action where necessary.

The School's Pastoral Care and Safeguarding Team (led by the Designated Teacher) will manage the implementation of the policy in partnership with the Principal.

All School Staff (*teaching and non-teaching*) have a responsibility for the day-to-day operation of this policy and will contribute to an inclusive and welcoming environment within the school.

Pupils/students are responsible for:

- respecting others in their language and actions;
- following all of the relevant school policies and codes of conduct in line with the principles of equality and inclusion.

3. How do we promote Equality and Inclusion?

General

- Compliance with all relevant legislation;
- Communication of our commitment to equality and diversity to all members of our community, for example through our websites;
- Informing all staff, students and governors of their responsibilities in promoting and maintaining equality;
- Setting up mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and review.

Curriculum

- The curriculum will display a discriminatory free approach to teaching and learning throughout our schools;
- Departments will present opportunities for promoting cultural diversity within subject where applicable.

Environment

- All reasonable measures will be taken not to discriminate against students;

- Staff will be informed at the beginning, and throughout the school year of any particular needs of the students.
- We will maintain a strategic approach to ensuring that our schools are a welcoming and accessible environment for all.

Extra-Curricular Activities:

- The College will endeavour to provide a wide range of activities which appeal to the interests of all students.

Employment

- Victoria College will comply with the law regarding equal opportunities and employment and implement fully approaches advised by Educational Authority NI in this regard.
- New staff will be made aware of the policy and be welcome to contribute to its development.
- Advertising will state that we are an equal opportunities employer and we will appoint the best candidate for the job.

4. Monitoring the Success of the Equality and Inclusion Policy

The implementation of this policy will be monitored annually through pastoral surveys.

5. Complaints Procedures

The school has a robust and transparent Complaints procedure. If a complaint is made regarding equality or inclusion, the Complaints process will be fairly and systematically applied. Access to the Complaints procedure can be found on the school website at <https://www.victoriacollege.org.uk/school-policies>

6. Review cycle of policy

The Equality and Inclusion Policy will be reviewed by all stakeholders through surveys and, if required, updated every **three** years in line with our school policy review cycle.

