



TAUNTON  
— SCHOOL —

# STUDENT EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

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# POLICY

**Policy Lead** – Deputy Head Pastoral and DSL

**Last Review** – September 2025

**Review Schedule** - Annually or following a change in legislation

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## **Statement of intent**

Taunton School understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, all schools have a duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality between different groups.
- Foster good relations between different groups.
- Promote mental health and wellbeing.

Our school's overall values are underpinned by our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. We are dedicated to ensuring that every student receives an education that offers them the best chance at fulfilling their potential, and to promoting mental wellbeing amongst our students. We are committed to supporting and celebrating all students' individual identities. We have developed this policy to provide a clear framework for how we will achieve our school's aims.

Our school's demographic state is directly linked to our overall aims for achieving equality.

To achieve our aims, we will adopt the following methods:

- Embedding equality within teaching and resources
- Using key data indicators to understand the needs and characteristics of our school
- Promoting community cohesion
- Promoting parental engagement
- Investing in regular staff training
- Using key data, such as measures of wellbeing, to monitor the progress of students with protected characteristics
- Regularly reviewing our policy to ensure it reflects current trends and issues

## **1. Legal framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018

This policy has due regard to statutory and good practice guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act and schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children'
- DfE (2018) 'Gender separation in mixed schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Equality Act 2010: advice for schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

The governing board will:

- Be responsible for ensuring the school complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure students and potential students will not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised in relation to:
  - Admissions.
  - The way the school provides an education for students.
  - How students are provided with access to benefits, facilities, advocacy and services.
  - The exclusion of a student or subjecting them to any other detriment.
- Ensure all policies are developed and implemented with appropriate equality impact assessments informing future plans in collaboration with the Head.

The Head will:

- Implement and champion this policy, ensuring that all staff and students apply its guidelines fairly in all situations.
- Ensure regular training sessions are conducted to ensure all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities, as well as to develop their skills and knowledge.

- Review and amend this policy, taking into account new legislation and government guidance, and previously reported incidents, in order to improve procedures.
- Ensure that appropriate counselling is made available for students who require immediate interventions, parental assistance and personal counselling.

Staff will:

- Be alert to the possible harassment of students, both inside and outside of the school, and to deal with incidents of harassment and/or discrimination as the highest priority.
- Carry out their statutory duties relating to equal opportunities and inclusivity and pertaining to their specific roles.
- Have due regard to the sensitivities of all students and not provide material that may cause offence.
- Act as a role model for equality, diversity and inclusion across the whole school community.

### **3. Protected characteristics**

Staff will not discriminate against, harass or victimise a student, or prospective student, because of their:

- Sex
- Race
- Disability, which includes mental health, encompassing prejudiced assumptions, attitudes or behaviours related to mental health
- Religion or belief\*
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Age\*
- Marriage and civil partnership\*

\* “religion” as being any religion (e.g. all the major faith groups) and “belief” as any religious or philosophical belief (e.g. non-religious worldviews such as humanism); a lack of religion or a lack of belief are also protected characteristics. The last two of these protected characteristics (“Age” and “Marriage and civil partnership”) do not apply to students within schools.

Staff will not discriminate against a student, or prospective student, because of a characteristic related to a person, such as a parent, with whom the student or prospective student is associated.

Staff will not discriminate against a student, or prospective student, because of a characteristic which they are believed to have, even if the belief is mistaken.

### **4. Sex**

For the purpose of this policy, sex refers to a student’s biological assignment at birth depending on their reproductive organs. The school understands that some students might be questioning the gender they

were assigned at birth. We engage with parents (providing there is no risk to the child) to support students questioning their gender.

Staff will ensure that students of one sex are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to students of other sexes.

The school will only separate students by sex where there is reasonable justification for doing so, or if one of the following applies:

- Students will suffer a disadvantage connected to their sex
- One sex has needs that are different from the needs of the other sex
- Participation in an activity by students of one sex is disproportionately low

The school will consider non-statutory exceptions on a case-by-case basis and regularly review the impact of any separation to ascertain whether it remains lawful.

There may be occasions where we deem it necessary to teach some subjects in single-sex classes, but the school will ensure that such classes do not give students a disadvantage when compared to students of the other sex in other classes. Occasions where students are separated to be taught in single-sex classes will be documented and the separation justified to ensure students, parents and, where necessary, the wider community can understand the reasons behind separation. When a subject is taught in a single-sex class, such as PE, consideration will be given to whether a student questioning their gender can be allowed to attend the single-sex class that corresponds with the gender they identify with.

Students' age and stage of development will be taken into consideration before segregating sports teams. Both sexes will have equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities; where separation is deemed necessary, the single-sex sports teams will receive the same quality and amount of resources.

## **5. Race and ethnicity**

Staff will ensure that students of all races and ethnicities are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other students and the school will regularly review its practices to ensure that they are fair.

Staff will ensure students with EAL are treated equally and fairly, while ensuring they are supported at all times.

The school will not segregate students on the basis of their race or ethnicity, understanding that claims of 'separate but equal' will not be tolerated, and that such actions will always be viewed as direct discrimination.

The school may, however, take positive action, e.g. organising open days for students and families of a specific race that is under-represented, to address the particular challenges affecting students of one racial or ethnic group, where this can be shown to be a proportionate way of dealing with such issues.

On admission to the school or via tutors, all parents and/or students over the age of 12 are given the opportunity to complete an ethnicity form.

## **6. Disability**

Staff will ensure that students with disabilities are not singled out or treated less favourably than other students simply because they have a disability, which includes any mental health issue, regularly reviewing our school practices to ensure they are fair.

The school will avoid implementing rules that could have an adverse effect on students with disabilities unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

Staff will ensure that they do not discriminate against students with disabilities because of something which is a consequence of their disability unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

The school will make any reasonable adjustments, and provide any auxiliary aids, necessary to ensure the full inclusion of students with disabilities, especially where the student also has SEND but does not have a SEND statement or EHC plan.

The school will meet its duty to undertake accessibility planning for students with disabilities and ensure that an Accessibility Plan is implemented and reviewed where necessary.

The school will adhere to its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for students with SEND.

## **7. Religion and belief**

Staff will ensure that students are not singled out or treated less favourably because of their religion or belief.

Although the School's religious ethos is based on Christian values and tradition, the School welcomes and respects the rights and freedoms of individuals from other religions and faiths (or no religion or faith). Where possible, religious observance will be facilitated, perhaps through allocation of prayer space or provision for resting whilst fasting.

Requests to be absent from school for religious observance will be considered. The School needs to be satisfied that the day has been set aside by the religious body and the parents or family of the child are members of that religious community. The school recognises that religious observance has an important part to play in valuing the spiritual development of all members of our community, strengthening social cohesion, developing a strong sense of self and celebrating shared values.

## **8. Sexual orientation**

Staff will ensure that all gay, lesbian and bisexual students, or the children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents, are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to other students.

The school will ensure that students are taught about the nature of marriage, including same-sex marriage, by presenting the facts of English and Welsh law – teachers will not offer personal opinions when discussing marriage in RSE. The school will educate students on positive relationships, families and gender

identities within the LGB and gender questioning community. RSE lessons will be taught in accordance with statutory guidance from the DfE and the school's policy.

Staff will ensure that any religious beliefs with regards to sexual orientation are taught to students in an educational context, in a manner that is not prejudicial or discriminatory.

Staff will support lesbian, gay, bisexual and gender questioning students to feel comfortable and ensure they can celebrate their identity. LGBT history month (February) will be celebrated within community time and used as an opportunity to educate students about lesbian, gay, bisexual and gender questioning identities. A support group, run by students (assisted by staff members) welcomes all identities and allies and ensures there is a designated safe space where students can discuss issues of sexual orientation without fear of discrimination.

## **9. Gender questioning and reassignment**

The School aims to give support and understanding to individuals who are questioning their gender, wish to take, or have taken steps, to present themselves in a gender different to the gender assigned at birth. The School recognises that this period can be very complex and difficult for the individual, and their family, and would wish to act in a supportive and sensitive way.

Staff will ensure that students are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are questioning their gender or have trans parents, siblings or other family members. The school recognises that gender reassignment does not necessarily involve physical change, and can be solely social and emotional.

In this policy "Transgender" is used to refer to the following groups:

- People covered by the 2010 Equality Act definition: "A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex."
- People who do not wish to transition permanently to a new gender role, but who identify as genderqueer, gender variant or intersex or who choose to live permanently with a more fluid gender identity.
- Gender Dysphoria (or Gender Identity Disorder) is a clinical condition that can present from as early as age 2 and can only be diagnosed by a medical and/or psychiatric expert. A person diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria may require treatment, e.g. hormone blockers (currently not available in the UK under the age of 16), to ameliorate the symptoms associated with being Transgender. A Transgender person may live their life without being or needing to be diagnosed as having Gender Dysphoria.

The School will seek to find out what 'gender questioning' means to the child or young person in order to provide and signpost the necessary support. Working with parents and guardians is an important part of this process. A young person's goals in terms of transition may change over time and the support offered needs to reflect and support this. A checklist can be found in appendix A to aid discussions with the young person and to allow the member of staff to risk assess.

Students will have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity within the constraints of our dress code, outlined in our School Uniform Guidance. The choice of whether to wear trousers or a skirt is made with parental consent. During the Summer Term, a choice should be made between wearing the full uniform requirement for either the Trouser or the Skirt uniform option, not a combination of both. (please see the School Uniform Guidelines)

The school will ensure that there are suitable toilet and changing facilities for students to use, including:

- Single Sex toilets and changing facilities.
- Private changing spaces.
- Gender neutral toilets in the Senior School and at TSI. The location and design of these toilets has been designed to reduce the risk of feeling uncomfortable or unsafe by sharing toilets but all students have the choice as to whether they wish to use single sex toilets or gender neutral toilets.

If a boarder expresses that they are questioning their gender, the Head of Boarding and the Deputy Head Pastoral will arrange a meeting with parents/guardians and the child as soon as possible. This allows for the student to have their voice heard and express their feelings whilst also being made aware of what can reasonably be accommodated, given the constraints of shared bedrooms and washing facilities in boarding houses. The School will make every reasonable adjustment possible to ensure the wellbeing and happiness of the student questioning their gender, whilst fulfilling its statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and the obligations under the National Minimum Boarding Standards.

A degree of discussion, care and preparation is required to enable gender questioning students to participate in residential trips. We will listen to the wishes of all students when deciding on room allocations to ensure all students are comfortable with the arrangements. If a student is questioning their gender and feels uncomfortable residing in a room with students of the same biological sex, the school will aim to accommodate the student in a single room. The degree of participation in physical activities that a gender questioning child or young person feels comfortable with should be discussed prior to any residential trip with them and with their parents or carers (unless there is reason to believe that by doing this could put them at risk).

The school will ensure that there is a designated safe space within the school where students can discuss issues of gender without fear of discrimination.

## **10. Pregnancy and maternity**

The school will ensure that students are not singled out or treated less favourably because they become pregnant, have recently given birth, have children or are breastfeeding.

The school will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate absence requests for the treatment and support of students who are pregnant or have just given birth.

## **11. Looked-after children (LAC)**

Staff will ensure that students are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are looked after or have previously been looked after.

Depending on the length of time spent in care, a personal education plan may be created and implemented for LAC and PLAC, to ensure that their education and development needs are fully covered, including appropriate transition and catch-up support to ensure that they do not fall behind.

Staff will ensure that any SEND that LAC or PLAC have are duly taken into account and addressed, whether this is with or without a SEND statement or EHC plan.

## **12. The curriculum**

Students will be exposed to thoughts and ideas of all kinds, and the school will not make any unjustified changes to curriculum content on the grounds of any protected characteristics that a student may have. The school will ensure, however, that the curriculum is as balanced as possible, and delivered in such a way that prevents discrimination and the promotion of prejudicial stereotypes.

To ensure equity, equality, diversity and acceptance are taught and promoted throughout each school area, the school will strive to ensure that Equal Opportunities are evident in:

1. The formal curriculum of the school e.g. lessons including PSHEE.
2. The informal curriculum of the school e.g. co-curricular events.
3. The 'hidden' curriculum of the school e.g. the ethos of the school.
4. Our commitment to training of staff

The school will respect the right of parents to withdraw their child from sex education.

## **13. Promoting inclusion**

The school will promote inclusion and equality at our school through:

- With parental authorisation, ensuring that students are called by their preferred pronouns and preferred names, which may be different from their legal pronouns and names, taking into account the correct spelling, structure and pronunciation.
- Ensuring, as far as possible, that our governing board and staff reflect the full diversity of our local community.
- Providing an environment and culture where prejudiced assumptions, attitudes and behaviours are continually challenged by staff and students.
- Instilling in students an awareness of prejudice, giving them confidence that it can, and must, be eradicated.
- Providing a variety of educational and residential visits that expose students to a wide range of cultural experiences.
- Ensuring equal access to opportunities, such as extracurricular activities and the curriculum.
- Taking care in the use of language and the choice of resources, so that teaching and non-teaching staff avoid reinforcing stereotypical views of society.
- Valuing the cultural experiences and contributions of all students, regardless of any protected characteristic that they may have.

- Ensuring our policy is available on our website to allow parents to gain their understanding, agreement and support for its provisions.
- Promoting equality of opportunity within the wider society.
- Discussing equality issues as an agenda item for the school council.
- Ensuring admission arrangements will not unfairly disadvantage a student from a particular social or racial group, or a student with SEND.

#### **14. Students that have left school**

The school's responsibility to not discriminate, harass or victimise will not end when a student has left school. It will continue to apply with regard to subsequent actions related to our previous relationship with the student, such as the provision of references.

#### **15. Bullying and discrimination**

Any bullying incidents of a child protection or safeguarding nature will be reported, recorded and dealt with in line with the process in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Behaviour Policy.

The Head / DSL will decide whether it is appropriate to notify social services and/or the police of any incident.

Concerns with regards to the handling of bullying and discrimination incidents will be dealt with via the procedures outlined in the Complaints Procedures Policy.

#### **16. Staff training**

New staff will receive relevant training on the provisions of this policy.

Staff will receive the appropriate training that will:

- Focus on staff specialisms in relation to equality, for example, a focus on homophobic bullying to address a planned approach towards inclusion.
- Ensure all staff are aware of, and comply with, current equalities legislation and government recommendations.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and how they can support students with protected characteristics.
- Provide support for teachers to effectively manage any discrimination towards students with protected characteristics.
- Provide up-to-date information on the terms, concepts and current understandings relating to each of the protected characteristics.
- Develop appropriate strategies for communication between parents, educators and students about any issues related to a protected characteristic.
- Ensure that the school is aware of, and participates in, relevant awareness days, such as Black History Month, World Disability Day and International Women's Day.

### Appendix A – Suggested checklist and risk assessment for students questioning their gender

Issue	Solution	Action	Future Action
Name change		Change on ISAMS as preferred name (following consultation and confirmation from parents / guardians)	Legal name change.  Examinations – agree with X and parents the chosen name and approach to exam boards. Consent for examination officer to contact the exam boards to discuss their process.
Chosen pronoun	Him, his, he, she, her, they etc	Consult parents and confirm with X	Train staff and pupils
House	Easier to consider a change of day houses as opposed to Boarding	Consultation process required involving discussion with parents and child to understand potential impact.  Meeting to discuss with all parties including HsMs involved.  Consider a risk assessment to support the change	
Sport	Consider the risk assessment provided by the governing bodies	Consult parents and child and consider which sport option can be accessed straight away. Easier if student is in Y11-Y13 due to range of options which are not single sex.	Arrange meeting with DoS and X to discuss options.
Toilets and changing rooms	Identify which toilets support the pupil's needs (choice between those that match their biological sex or gender neutral toilets)	Discuss with parents and child.  Risk assessment plus any material changes to support the pupil.	

Confidentiality	Confirm with X and parents, who can be informed of what and when	Meeting arranged to discuss this.	Keep under review as ongoing
Staff training	Train staff at next staff meeting	Consider what training is needed for staff and how this should be delivered.	Schedule training for future
Pupil guidance	PSHEE workshops	Investigate appropriate workshops/presentations etc	Put into schedule. Contact made with the 2BU who will help lead this.
School uniform	Confirm uniform requirements	Consult child and parents to consider changes to the uniform policy to support	Continue to monitor/review and issue regarding uniform
School trips	Discuss potential concerns, in particular trips which require an overnight stay	Carry out a risk assessment to identify any appropriate adjustments which can be made to support X, and ensure full inclusion in the trip. See page 8 for guidance on residential trips.	Continue to monitor and review.
Email account (s)	Change / add name	Confirmation from parents / guardians.  Speak with IT	
School Data base	Name changed on data base	Confirmation from parents.  Consult with MIS manager to ensure all necessary changes are made	Review with X to ensure all necessary changes have been made. This is also directly linked to exam entry and names on certificates (as above)
Parents	The default is to include them. The exception is when it is felt that communication with parents places the child at risk	Meet with parents to agree the overall risk assessment.	Continue to liaise with parents