

## Equal Opportunities Policy for Pupils (Including EYFS)

*For you are not equally strong, but each person should be given  
what they personally need* *The Rule of St Augustine*

### Diversity, Equality & Inclusivity Statement:

The commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusivity is at the heart of our values at Austin Friars. Equality means creating an environment where pupils have the chance to achieve their full potential, free from barriers, prejudice, and discrimination. Inclusion is about recognising that each pupil is unique and that their needs can be met in different ways. Diversity means recognising, respecting, and celebrating the added value that differences bring. Our unwavering dedication to our school values – Truth, Love and Unity - is how we fulfil our mission at Austin Friars. It is through our commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusivity that our pupils are empowered to be authentic and succeed.

In accord with the Equality Act 2010 the School does not discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- in relation to admissions
- in the way it provides education for pupils
- in the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service
- by excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

Specifically, the School does not discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably because of the following ‘protected characteristics’:

- sex
- race
- age
- disability
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy or maternity.
- marriage and civil partnership

### Context

Related to the above statements, the School has a number of policies including a Safeguarding Policy an Admissions Policy, a Learning Support Policy, an Accessibility Plan and an Anti-Bullying Policy.

### Pastoral

The School community is underpinned by its Augustinian values. This enshrines a respect and care for every individual at its heart and this is expressed explicitly through the assembly programme in School. The School pastoral system focuses on the needs of the individual. Pastoral care of pupils is the

responsibility of all staff and every pupil has a form tutor/class teacher who is, in the first instance, responsible for the well-being of the pupils.

Relationships between staff and pupils, pupils and other pupils also reflect this concern and respect. The quality of these relationships is often remarked upon by visitors to the School.

The School is robust in its response to all aspects of bullying/discriminatory behaviour as detailed in the Anti-Bullying Policy and recorded through the School's Pupil Tracking system.

### **Curriculum**

Austin Friars is committed to providing a full curriculum to as many pupils and students as possible and aims to enable all young people to achieve their full potential, academically, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

The Enrichment (PSHE) Programme proactively espouses the equal value of every individual and also explicitly focuses on the imperative not to discriminate because of any of the 'protected characteristics'. Four designated tutors, in conjunction with the phase leader for Enrichment, are responsible for the delivery of the PSHE/Enrichment curriculum in the Senior School 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Forms in which pupils are encouraged to know themselves and understand their relationship with others in the School and beyond.

A further eight modules are delivered in the 6<sup>th</sup> form preparing pupils for life beyond Austin Friars. In the Junior School the PSHE curriculum is delivered by the class teacher.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

The School provides an optional extra-curricular programme for pupils which takes place in the lunch hour, after school on weekdays and on Saturdays and Sundays. This programme provides opportunities for pupils to develop specific interests, to mix socially and to broaden their cultural, physical and recreational horizons.

The School seeks to provide the appropriate balance of extra-curricular activities for all pupils, taking into account their age and their other commitments either in school or outside.

### **Equal Opportunities and Disability**

Disability is defined as when a person has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

The School will:

- not treat disabled pupils less favourably
- take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage in matters of admission and education.

The School will undertake all reasonable adjustments to address the needs of a disabled pupil. These may be constituted from any of three elements:

- Provisions, criteria and practices
- Auxiliary aids and services
- Physical features.

In deciding if an adjustment is reasonable the School will consider various factors including:

- The extent to which special educational provision will be provided to a disabled pupil under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014

- The resources of the School and the availability of financial or other assistance
- The financial and other costs of making the adjustment
- The extent to which taking any particular step would be effective in overcoming the substantial disadvantage suffered by a disabled pupil
- The practicability of the adjustment
- The effect of the disability on the individual
- Health and Safety requirements
- The need to maintain academic, musical, sporting and other standards
- The interests of other pupils and prospective pupils.

### **Admissions**

The published Admissions Policy for Austin Friars lays out the general criteria for admissions. The underlying criterion is the ability of the School to educate each individual to the best of his/her ability and in line with the general level of attainment of the peer group. The School is able to provide Learning Support within the facilities and staffing of the Learning Support Department which works with pupils in small groups. The School's admissions policy takes into account the provision it can reasonably make consistent with the size and dynamics of the Learning Support group in each year cohort.

The Admissions Policy is also set in the context of a commitment to high academic standards. Clearly, it is important that each pupil not only meets the admissions criteria but is able to meet this commitment throughout his/her school days. The School's policy is to apply these criteria to all pupils and potential pupils regardless of any disability of which it is aware, subject to its obligations to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage compared to any pupil or potential pupil who is not disadvantaged because of his/her disability.

Prospective parents are asked to give full details of any disability in relation to a prospective pupil at the time of application. In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil the school may take such advice and require such assessments as it regards appropriate. This might include:

- An up to date school report, including a confidential statement from the pupil's head teacher
- A specialist report, e.g. from a doctor or educational psychologist
- A report from the School Head of Learning Support
- A Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health Care Plan
- Any other information/background material parents feel will assist the School

The School will be sensitive to any parental requests for confidentiality, subject to the need to involve the specialist staff of the School in an assessment of a pupil's or prospective pupil's needs. For pupils who sit the entrance examination at 11+, the School will seek to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled candidates notified to the School. Prospective parents will be asked to discuss any relevant adjustments at the time of application.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- Allowance of extra time in any School entrance examination (consistent with the examination body's guidance) and allowance for the use of laptop computers
- Permission to sit the School entrance assessment in the more familiar surroundings of the present school
- Use of large print materials
- Use of 'coloured' paper and exercise books
- Use of coloured overlays

## **Curriculum**

The School has considered the need to balance the needs of disabled pupils against the benefits of integrating them into the school community.

The problems of physical access caused by a subject-based classroom arrangement, the topographical spread of teaching areas, the physical size and layout of classrooms, and the difficulties associated with old buildings are all considered (see Accessibility Plan).

The following adjustments have been made or can reasonably be made:

- Dropping the requirement to study one or more foreign languages where this is desirable for dyslexic pupils
- Reducing the number of GCSEs taken by pupils with learning difficulties and providing compensating learning support lessons as appropriate
- Provision of one-to-one support inside the classroom (where space permits) or outside the classroom
- Adapting or reducing the compulsory physical education and games requirements
- Provision of special educational materials such as computer programmes; “talking books” produced by pupils; large-print/Braille materials
- Use of specialist equipment, e.g. transmitters for hearing-impaired pupils
- Increased access to the Library.

## **Pastoral**

The School has considered ways in which the pastoral structures and systems can be adapted to meet the needs of disabled pupils:

- Small group work in the Learning Support Department and the use of support on a one-to-one basis enables the School to provide a greater level of pastoral care for disabled pupils
- The School will consider adapting the disciplinary sanctions in exceptional circumstances; e.g. where behavioural difficulties arise from a pupil’s disability. This is balanced against the need to maintain good order in the School generally.
- The PSHCE/Enrichment programme includes topics which encourage all pupils to consider the needs of the disadvantaged, especially where such disadvantage arises as a result of a disability
- A pupil “buddy” system has been used as a means of providing peer support for pupils
- The staff INSET programme includes specialist advice on the needs of pupils with specific disabilities. This advice is sometimes available within the staffing of the School, but may involve outside experts in some cases.

## **Exams**

The School will take every available step to ensure that pupils with a disability are afforded the best possible opportunities for the completion of their exams. This will include the following:

- Pupils who suffer injury just before, or during, the exam period will be offered alternative venues should they be unable to access the exam hall. Rooms will be found on the ground floor and will be appropriately set out to comply with exam regulations.
- Should the pupil require any access arrangements this will be processed by the Head of Learning Support or by the Exams Officer as soon as they are made aware of the need.
- Specialist equipment will be provided by the School should there be a need, for example, computer access.
- Should the disability require the aid of a scribe or a reader, this will be provided by the school.

## **Extra-Curricular Activities**

The School has considered access to certain activities which may be potentially hazardous for pupils with certain disabilities and would seek in such cases the advice of national governing authorities in making a risk assessment.

The appropriate risk assessments for School trips are used to identify any potential hazards for disabled pupils and the means, if any, of minimising any risks.

### **Premises**

Austin Friars consists of a number of different buildings of different styles and ages whose functions have changed over the years. Many of the buildings are old and do not readily lend themselves to major structural change. A recent programme of New Building with the school has taken every step to ensure that all pupils can access them.

The School has carried out a programme of refurbishment to all its buildings in recent years and this has included a number of developments which increase access for disabled pupils:

- Ramped access to the gym, New Hall
- A major classroom refurbishment programme in the Senior School has led to acoustic improvements by laying carpets; the introduction of blinds to reduce glare, and the installation of new lighting.
- The setting up of a learning support department, at the very heart of the school, with its dedicated computer provision.

The first, second and third floors in the Senior School main building are currently accessible only by stairs. The School has considered the use of lifts and/or chairlifts though these would not be practical given the nature of the buildings. The School will, however, consider ways in which the need to access the first, second and third floors can be obviated by changing the use of rooms, where required by demand and circumstances.

The School has invested heavily in increasing ICT facilities across the School.

The Science laboratories in the Mendel building and the Junior School fully comply with disabled access requirements and regulations. Any further new building or significant adaptation of existing buildings will comply with the normal disabled access requirements and regulations.

### **Resources**

The School will seek to find the resources needed to make reasonable adjustments as indicated above through careful allocation of its financial resources without making unreasonable demands on fee-paying parents.

The School will assist parents in obtaining extra resources needed through the funding of Education Health Care Plans where this is appropriate. In some cases, the School will make arrangements with parents themselves for funding necessary extra resources.

The School strives to integrate all disabled pupils in such a way that all pupils and their parents understand their special needs. Parents of able-bodied pupils are aware that the School admits a number of pupils who are disabled. The School will do everything possible to encourage parents to support the School in its commitment to all pupils, mindful that provision for all pupils, disabled and able-bodied, depends on the choice parents make to pay for their children to be educated at the School.

## **Equal Opportunities and EYFS**

### **Special Educational Needs**

The School has a dedicated Learning Support Department which supports and guides teaching staff to meet the needs of all pupils who may have additional needs, whether it is a learning difficulty, disability or other specific need. The SENCO is the head of Learning Support.

### **Admissions Procedures**

Admissions procedures for a child entering Pre-School or Kindergarten are designed to ensure that individual's children's specific needs are met. Where a child has an identified disability or medical problem there will be detailed discussion with the child's parents to ensure that the School is able to meet the needs of the child. A detailed pre-admissions programme will be followed, specific to the needs of that child. The school will work closely with other professionals who are involved in the child's care and development, for example Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Portage Workers, Specialist Advisory Teachers and medical professionals.

### **Reasonable Adjustments**

Where a child has specific medical problems or disability, all reasonable adjustments will be made to aid the child's ability to access the curriculum and participate in all activities. This may include special equipment, such as a special chair or tools such as scissors. Where a child needs more time to complete activities this will be provided. A child may need more support from a teaching assistant and, in some cases, may need 1:1 support. The School will facilitate this.

### **Monitoring and Screening**

Through observation and assessment teachers may identify that a child has a learning difficulty, either generally or in a specific area. The teacher will discuss their concerns with the parent and seek their permission to approach the SENCO for an action plan to be agreed or a decision made to continue to monitor carefully the child's learning and development.

In some cases a referral to another agency may be appropriate, for example to Speech Therapy in the case of delayed speech. In all cases the referral will be made with the consent of the child's parents or the parents may make the referral themselves.

Formal screening for dyslexia begins in the Preparatory year in the Junior School.

### **Inclusion**

The principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance contain four themes:

- A unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

The Early Years Foundation Stage at Austin Friars aims to support these principles by providing an inclusive and positive environment in which children can learn and develop. This is in line with the whole-school policy as stated in the handbook for parents of children in the EYFS.

The EYFS is the Pre-School and Kindergarten stages of Austin Friars. As such, our objectives reflect the ethos and objectives of the whole School. The School has high expectations of its pupils and encourages them to develop their potential in a disciplined yet happy, positive and productive atmosphere. This means not only attaining high academic standards but also realising sound spiritual and social values, self-discipline and the development of a sense of purpose for life. The EYFS is the beginning for children in the Austin Friars community and to this end we aim to develop sound spiritual

and social values by encouraging children to be aware of others and to co-operate with and care for each other.

In the EYFS we recognise that the first years in a child's life are the most formative, as at this age children are developing their own individual characters, attitudes and opinions. We aim to provide children with the best possible start in their education by fostering in them a positive attitude to learning. We think it important to encourage children to have a real desire to explore and investigate the world around them, gaining high self-esteem in the process. A positive attitude to learning is continually reinforced by enabling the children to feel confident about themselves, their abilities and their decisions thus enabling them to achieve a sense of independence.

Inclusion of all children will be fostered through planning of activities to support and extend all children's learning; a rich and varied learning environment; positive and warm relationships between staff and children; constructive and open relationships with parents; respect and valuing of a child's first language or preferred means of communication; a positive behaviour policy which promotes tolerance, sharing and negotiation; a variety of resources to reflect children's backgrounds. Through the use of books, photographs, artefacts and ICT the children will learn about the similarities and differences between themselves and others. Resources will reflect the range of people in our society. Children will be introduced to different family traditions and different faiths through discussion of the children's own experiences and through the celebration of festivals from different religions and cultures. Through the 'Seesaw' app, parents and children will be encouraged to share with staff their experiences and the things they have enjoyed doing in School, as well as outside of School.

#### **Review - EYFS**

Where issues for development are identified they will be included in the School Development Plan.

Bursar

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