

Cookstown High School



Equal Opportunities Policy

Reviewed: March 2023

Next Review: March 2026

Policy Overview

Policy Title:	Equal Opportunities Policy
Target Audience:	Governors, Staff, Parents
Policy Lead:	Principal
Policy Developed by:	EA and SLT
Those Consulted:	Education Authority
Ratified by Board of Governors on:	
Implementation Date:	
Review Date:	
Principal:	Miss G Evans
Chair of Board of Governors:	Mrs L Dripps

This procedure has been reviewed to include reference to the remit of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) in investigating complaints from members of the public in relation to maladministration in publicly-funded schools.

RECORD OF POLICY REVIEWS & AMENDMENTS

The following table outlines any significant changes/amendments made to this procedure since it was ratified by the Board of Governors on:

DATE OF REVIEW OR AMENDMENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGES / AMENDMENTS TO PROCEDURE	APPROVED BY

Ethos and Rationale

Cookstown High School's history and ethos leads it to be an open and inclusive school which cherishes the uniqueness of each individual. It is important therefore that all aspects of the school's life and work are designed to ensure that all stakeholders are afforded equal opportunities and the maximum opportunity to realise their potential.

The Christian ethos of the school lays emphasis on the uniqueness of each individual and School therefore values each person's worth, celebrating individuality and the cultural diversity of the community centred on the school and strives to maintain mutual respect.

Schools are places of learning and central to that is the importance of free speech. While free speech must never be used as an excuse to promote prejudice, discrimination or unfairness this policy should not be seen as a way to limit freedom of speech. This policy should be read and applied in a manner consistent with the school ethos.

Aims and Objectives

- Cookstown High School will not unlawfully discriminate against anyone, whether pupil, parent, staff or visitor, on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age (or other Section 75 category).
- The school will promote the principles of fairness and justice for all through the education, opportunities and support that it provides in the school.
- The school will seek to ensure that, wherever possible, all pupils have equal access to the full range of educational opportunities provided by the school.
- The school will strive to constantly identify and remove any forms of indirect discrimination that may form barriers to learning for some groups by regularly assessing the impact of its policies, practices and guidelines.
- Through positive educational experiences, and support for each individual's point of view, the school will aim to promote positive social attitudes and respect for all.
- The school and its staff will strive to be proactive in tackling prejudice and unlawful discrimination.

Equal Opportunities in the Curriculum

- Every pupil has an equal entitlement to the Northern Ireland Curriculum and, subject to entry requirements, to all other areas of the curriculum, regardless of language, gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, disability, religion, belief or age.

- Pupils should have equal access to an appropriate curriculum regardless of academic ability. Consequently, this policy should be read in conjunction with the Special Educational Needs & Inclusion Policy.
- The school will monitor any careers advice or work experience placements provided by outside agencies to aim to ensure equal opportunities.
- All forms of individual and subject support, guidance, amenities and facilities, including extra-curricular activities, will be equally available to all pupils
- Behavioural expectations and any disciplinary sanctions will be free of gender, race or culture bias.
- Teachers will assess all materials and resources used for teaching and take appropriate action whenever possible to ensure that they reflect concepts, themes and information which seeks to eliminate prejudice, racism and discrimination. Teachers should try to ensure that all pupils feel that their language and culture is both acknowledged and valued.
- The School will actively encourage an ethos in which all pupils feel secure and valued.

Race / Ethnicity

Cookstown High School will:

- Strive to eliminate all forms of racism and racial discrimination; promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of different racial and ethnic groups.
- The School will not tolerate any form of racism or racist behaviour. Should a racist incident occur, it will be dealt with in accordance with school procedures.
- The school will endeavour to be welcoming to all minority groups. The celebration and understanding of cultural diversity is promoted through the topics studied by the pupils and is reflected in displays, resources, assemblies and other events.
- Cultural diversity and respect for others will be celebrated and reflected across the whole curriculum.
- The school will endeavour to give pupils the understanding they need to recognise prejudice and reject racial discrimination.

Gender

- The school will constantly examine its curriculum, procedures and materials for gender bias or inequality, particularly in relation to girls' expectations and behaviour.
- The school is committed to providing a curriculum which avoids unnecessary historical gender divisions. All pupils experience subjects historically considered to be suitable for a single sex e.g. football, cooking, technology, etc.
- The CEIAG provided in School encourages pupils to pursue less conventional subjects and interests irrespective of their gender.

Disability

- The school is committed to meeting the needs of pupils with disabilities, as it is to meeting the needs of all within the school.
- The school is committed to providing an environment that allows disabled pupils access, where possible, to all areas of learning or associated services provided for, or offered to, pupils at the school, including educational visits and other off-site activities e.g. swimming.
- Teachers will modify teaching and learning as appropriate for pupils with disabilities. For example, they may give additional time to complete certain activities or modify teaching materials or offer alternative activities where pupils are unable to manipulate tools or equipment.

Religion / Belief

- The School will respect the religious beliefs and practices of all staff, pupils, parents and visitors and will comply with all reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice. This includes respect for lack of religion or belief.

Age

- The Board of Governors will ensure that no-one is denied a job, an equal chance of training or promotion or suffers from harassment or victimisation because of their age.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governors

- In this policy the Board of Governors has set out its commitment to equal opportunities and will continue to act to ensure that all members of the school community are treated both fairly and equally.
- The Board of Governors will act to ensure that no-one is unlawfully discriminated against whilst in the school on account of their race, gender, religion or belief, disability or age.

Principal

- The Principal will ensure that the school's policy on equal opportunities and supporting policies are implemented, and is supported by the Board of Governors in so doing.
- The Principal will ensure that all staff are aware of the school policy on equal opportunities and that teachers apply these guidelines fairly in all situations.
- The Principal will promote the principles of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum and in providing opportunities for training.
- The Principal will promote respect for other people in all aspects of school life.
- The Principal will view all incidents of unfair treatment with due concern.

Teachers and support staff

- Class teachers will recognise their own prejudices and seek to ensure fairness in teaching strategies and ensure that all pupils are treated fairly and with respect. The school will not knowingly discriminate against any child or young person, parent or visitor and will actively seek to identify and remove indirect discrimination
- When selecting classroom materials, teachers will strive to provide resources which give positive images and which challenge stereotypical images of minority groups.
- When designing schemes of work, teachers will pay cognisance to the equal opportunities policy, both in the choice of topics to study and in how to approach sensitive issues.
- All teachers and support staff will challenge any incidents of prejudice or discrimination and draw them to the attention of the appropriate staff.

Pupils

- Pupils will be made aware of the policy, act in accordance with it and draw any incidents of prejudicial treatment or discrimination to the attention of the class teacher and or a Vice Principal.

Parents

- Parents will be made aware of the policy and should draw any incidents of prejudice or discrimination to the attention of the School.

Visitors and contractors on site

- All visitors and contractors are required to adhere to the school policy.

Monitoring / Review

The Board of Governors will:

- Be cognisant of the progress of pupils from minority groups, comparing it to the progress made by other pupils in the school;
- Oversee the staff appointment process to ensure that no-one applying for a post at the school is discriminated against;
- Require the Principal to report to governors regularly on the effectiveness of this policy;
- Consider any complaints from pupils, parents, staff or visitors regarding equal opportunity as appropriate;
- Monitor the implementation of the Positive Behaviour Policy, to ensure that pupils from minority groups are not unfairly treated.

Linked documents:

Anti Bullying Policy

Assembly Policy

Pastoral Care Policy

Positive Behaviour Policy

Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Policy

Staff handbook