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Diversity and Equality Policy including SEND and Accessibility

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Enquiries	1
Purpose	2
Scope.....	2
Policy Statement	2
The College's Commitment.....	2
Appendix 1 - Meeting the Needs of Students	

INTRODUCTION

This policy aims to detail the framework for promoting and ensuring equality of opportunity for all who learn at and work for or on behalf of Richard Huish College. In particular, it includes details of how RH meets the needs of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Diversity and Equality in this context means that we recognise, value and respect individual and group differences.

ENQUIRIES

Enquiries and suggestions from students in relation to this policy should be addressed to the Assistant Principal: Student Support.

Enquiries and suggestions from staff in relation to this policy should be addressed to the Director of Human Resources.

PURPOSE

This policy:

1. Aims to ensure that relevant and effective equal opportunities practices exist within the College and that a culture of continuous improvement in those practices is encouraged. The policy sets out the framework of values and responsibilities within which other College policies and codes must operate and with which they must be consistent.
2. Articulates the right of every member of the College to work without fear of unfair or prejudicial treatment or discrimination. This requires the College to provide a safe, co-operative learning and working environment based on mutual respect and, as a result, one in which all individuals - students, staff and other users of the College - can operate effectively and can flourish. This provision extends to students working at employers' premises eg apprentices and voluntary or compulsory work experience.
3. Explicitly commits the College to:
 - a. Being proactive in promoting equality, diversity and good relations, and in tackling unfair discrimination and treatment
 - b. Encouraging and supporting all students to help them get the best from themselves
 - c. Supporting and developing all staff so that they can operate effectively and contribute to the provision of an excellent experience and outcome for our students
 - d. Working with our partners in the wider community, including employers, to establish, promote and model equality good practice and to tackle unfair discrimination
 - e. Working with parents to ensure individual student's needs are fully understood

SCOPE

All students, staff and other users of the College, encompassing all College activities on the College campus and at employers' premises when College work is involved.

POLICY STATEMENT

The College's Commitment

Richard Huish College is committed to the principle and practice of equality of treatment and opportunity for everyone. It is the first of our College's values: 'We have a culture that cares for the individual and promotes inclusivity, equality and mutual respect – specialist support is available to all and diversity is embraced.' It is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone within the College to actively combat any direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour that could provoke feelings of discomfort or disadvantage towards others. This could be on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, religion and belief or sexual orientation, as outlined by the Equality Act 2010.

In addition to being bound by the legislative framework, the College will use recognised codes of practice i.e. the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Code of practice in Section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014 as the benchmark for procedures and measures introduced to ensure greater equality of opportunity.

The Equality Act lists the following groups of individuals (and associated persons) as having protected characteristics. The acronym **REGARDS** may be used as an *aide memoire*:

- **RacE** –the College is committed to providing a learning environment in which staff and students can develop their potential without the barriers of racial discrimination. We actively promote understanding and good relations between different ethnicities. We monitor our student

intake and staff profile to ensure that we maintain a diversity which is representative of our local community.

Gender – Staff and students are entitled to dignity and respect in the workplace and learning environment. We recognise that discrimination, direct or indirect, based on gender is unjust and it will not be tolerated. We also recognise gender differences and individuality and that there can be differences between the gender assigned at birth and gender identity. We will not discriminate against people on the grounds of gender variation at any stage in the process of gender reassignment. We will comply with statutory duties in respect of Gender Pay.

Age – The College is committed to ensuring that all students and staff are treated fairly irrespective of their age. Age will not be a consideration in decisions concerning staff recruitment and selection, training, appraisal or during the invocation of procedures relating to capability or selection for redundancy. Being a sixth form college, the majority of students are below 18 years of age and the College must therefore comply with Safeguarding legislation. Applications from older students to study alongside the main cohort are carefully vetted in accordance with Department for Education’s publication ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory guidelines for schools and colleges’.

- **Religion/faith** – The College does not promote any particular religion or faith but through its work with the Richard Huish Foundation it maintains a link with the local Church of England Diocese. The College welcomes religious and cultural diversity in its community and wishes to treat everyone’s views with dignity and fairness. The principle that there is a human right of thought, belief and conscience is upheld. The College acknowledges that some general holidays are based around the Christian calendar and that some holy days of other religions may conflict with academic timetabling. Students should advise the admissions officer or their tutor at the beginning of their course of any request for reasonable accommodation of their religion/faith. Staff should consult the Director of Human Resources. In making this commitment, the College recognises that its practices are bound by current legislation, including the College PREVENT duty to ‘prevent people being drawn into terrorism’ as stated in the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill.
- **Disability** – We recognise that disabilities take many forms, both hidden and visible and welcome the definition of a disabled person as set out in the Equality Act 2010 :

‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on an individual’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities...’

The College is committed to identifying the disadvantages that disability causes and removing any consequent barriers to learning or to full participation in College life. Reasonable adjustments to all aspects of College life can be made with early disclosure of need being vital.

- **Sexual Orientation** – We will tackle discrimination and promote equality for bisexual, gay and lesbian staff and students. We actively work with organisations who support students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning of their sexuality.
- **Other protected characteristics** – Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity. We will not treat staff and students less favourably or discriminate against them on these grounds.

The commitment to good practice in equal opportunities extends to everyone in the College and all that we do. It is implicit that we will develop policies, procedures and systems which avoid and/or tackle unfair treatment or discrimination and which will promote equality of opportunity, respect for individuals and good relations between people across **all** areas of the College, both for example and in particular in:

- Marketing and admissions procedures
- Teaching and learning
- Curriculum content and materials
- Attainment, assessment and progression
- The personal development of students and their tutorial care
- Opportunities for enrichment activities
- Access to further individual support for students
- Partnerships with parents, communities, employers and other agencies
- Staff recruitment and professional development
- Physical environment and facilities on the Estates
- Work experience supervision and other employer-related activity.

The College will take appropriate opportunities in every area of its work to publicise and make explicit its commitment to the principle and practice of equality of treatment and opportunity. In accordance with the SEND Code of Practice, we will share with the Local Authority clear and transparent plans about the services we provide for students with SEND as stated in our 'Local Offer'. Policies and practices developed by College managers in these areas will take a lead from and will comply with the principles and framework set out in this policy document.

It is also the responsibility of individual members of the College community to adopt the aims and values of this policy; to ensure that unfair discrimination or prejudice does not occur; to take responsibility for their own behaviour and modify it if necessary.

Implementation

The impact of Equality and Diversity initiatives will be monitored through measures such as:

- Teaching and Learning Observations
- Feedback from students and from staff via questionnaires and discussion forums for course representative and staff voice groups regarding attitudes and opinions
- Analysis of complaints and incidents
- Inspection by Ofsted and other quality assurance agencies
- Collecting and using data and information to evaluate how well the College deals with Equality and Diversity in relation to student admissions, student retention to course and within College and in respect of individual and collective student progress and achievement
- Analysis of staff recruitment and selection processes.

Staff have an individual and collective responsibility to reflect the values, principles and standards set out in this policy.

In addition to the general responsibilities set out in this policy document, the Corporation (governing body), Senior Managers, Heads of School, Course Managers and the Director of Human Resources have specific roles and responsibilities:

- a) The Corporation is responsible for ensuring that Richard Huish College complies with current statutory requirements. It is incumbent upon the Academic Planning and Quality Committee to seek assurance from the Assistant Principal: Student Support.

- b) Senior Managers, led by the Assistant Principal: Student Support, should ensure that the College is legally compliant and must promote equality and diversity within staff training, student induction, human resources matters, procurement, partnership and sub-contracting activities and in complaints management.
- c) Heads of Schools and Course Managers must ensure that teaching and learning promotes best practice in equality and diversity and that analysis of course performance data includes analysis of participation, retention and achievement relating to gender, disability and ethnicity.
- d) The Director of Human Resources must ensure that the College is legally compliant in respect of staffing matters at all stages of the recruitment, selection, induction and performance management and exit processes.

Associated Publications

- The Equality Report of Richard Huish College is published annually on the College website; it is also available in other formats on request. There is a section on Equality contained within the College Annual Self-Assessment Report, available to all staff of the College. Equality Objectives are regularly published and subject to regular review.
- In accordance with the SEND Code of Practice (section 41 of the Children's and Families Act 2014), we provide Somerset Local Authority with details of our SEND services for publication as part of the statutory duty to publish the 'Local Offer'.
- The Safeguarding Policy
- A range of human resources policies
- Fitness to Study Protocol

Appendix 1 - Meeting the Needs of Students

Step 1 Pre application – The College prospectus details the ‘Local Offer’ at Richard Huish College and students and their parents/ carers can discuss their support needs at any time including –

- Open Evenings and other marketing events
- Transition review meetings at their school
- Informal visits to the college at the student’s request

Step 2 On application – The application form invites students to disclose any support needs they may have for any of the protected characteristics. We encourage students and their parents to do so as soon as support needs are known. A member of the Student Services team may be involved with the interview. At the interview students and their parents can also make a disclosure of a new or previously undisclosed need. At interview or in any follow up meeting a recommendation of support may be made. This may include specific arrangements and/or access to a more universal provision within College. For SEND students, the College will need a copy of any recent assessments or a letter from a professional such as a medical practitioner. In the case of students with high SEND support needs, the College will liaise with the Education Funding Agency to secure appropriate funding approval before a College place can be confirmed, including, for example, a student who may require personal care or a sign language interpreter.

Step 3 Transition and enrolment activity – During transition events students and their parents can also make a disclosure of a new or previously undisclosed need. Students and parents with SEND needs will be invited to an additional event to explain the model of support offered and its aim to increase the student’s levels of independence. When appropriate, a risk assessment will be completed and if needed external specialist services will be consulted e.g. Visually Impaired service. Only in exceptional circumstances will students be able to enrol on a course for which they do not have the official entry requirements. Students may have special timetables to facilitate adjustments such as rest breaks, personal care or medical interventions.

Step 4 On programme – Where students have agreed to their support needs being shared with all College staff their support plan is entered on the student’s Individual Learning Plan (ILP) so all staff can access it on a “need to know basis”. Teachers/Assessors/Support staff can then differentiate their activities to enable students to access the curriculum by making reasonable adjustments. This information will be kept in an up to date class portrait for each teaching group. These adjustments could include specialist software or IT equipment, extra time, coloured overlays, larger font, sitting arrangements, exit cards, specialist equipment, etc. In the case of SEND students with significant support plans students may also have discreet support sessions outside their timetabled classes. These discreet sessions will be withdrawn if a student fails to attend or engage or where the student/staff/ parents agree that they are no longer needed. Where external agencies such as Children, Adolescent and Mental Health service staff are providing support the College will endeavour to provide a room for the consultation to maximise attendance in class. Reasonable adjustments can be made to the College attendance target of 93% where appropriate however the College will implement the Fitness to Study protocol where attendance falls significantly below that. Whilst on programme a student and their parents can also make a disclosure of new or previously undisclosed need and appropriate arrangements will be made.

Step 5 Examination – Many courses have external examinations which are overseen by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and where specialist exam arrangements (known as Access arrangements) are deemed necessary, there are very strict regulations and times scales. Under JCQ Access arrangements regularly change and they are very strict about the assessment of need. In order to have many Access arrangements a student must

complete an “Access Arrangements Assessment” which must be performed by a postgraduate specialist assessor. This assessment is not transferrable from one organisation to another. It is the College’s decision whether to carry out these assessments and this will be based on whether a need has been identified by the teaching or support team. Teaching staff will provide evidence to support the application when students meet the threshold for Access Arrangements. Where students miss “Access Arrangements Assessment” appointments without reasonable notice or reason, the student will be placed to the bottom of the waiting list. Should a student/parents wish to have a learning need investigated which the College does not support we can provide contact details for post graduate specialist assessors. Following the Access assessment the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) in College will apply for Access arrangements, if a student meets the criteria, in partnership with the Exams officer. Access arrangements will be made in accordance with the JCQ regulations. On a student by student and subject by subject basis considerations will be given to

- Adapting the assessment arrangements eg rest breaks
- Adapting the assessment materials eg. enlarged exam papers
- The provision of specialist equipment or adaptations of standard equipment e.g word processor
- Adaptation of the physical environment for access purposes eg exam room near accessible toilet.

Invigilators will have training to support their understanding of Access arrangements. Where evidence of need requires an external agency’s assessment eg psychiatrist it is the student’s and the parents’ responsibility to ensure it is provided to the College.

Every effort will be made to provide similar Access Arrangements for internal examinations, dependent upon timescale and business needs.

Step 6 – Progression from College – The Careers and Progression team will give universal support regarding progression to university, employment and training. Where students have SEND needs we may engage external services to support successful transition, including SEND services with Somerset Children and Adult Care. We do not carry out assessments for Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) but will enable contact with specialist assessors for DSA.

Physical Accommodation and Access

With the exception of a backstage area and some administration offices in a listed building the whole campus is accessible. Accessible toilets are available in all buildings. Students and staff who identify as transgender are requested to use the Accessible toilets. Accessible car parking spaces have been designated for the use of disabled people only. For those students needing assistance in the case of an emergency evacuation, evac chairs are available and fire marshals are trained in their use.

Medical Support

There is a team of First Aiders on a duty rota and a first aid room. All students are invited to disclose medical needs and when appropriate an individual risk assessment will be completed. With the student’s agreement, the risk assessment will be included in the Individual Learning Plan and additionally circulated to all the first aid duty staff.