

## Equality policy statement

We champion aspiration, ambition and achievement, and lead by example on equality and diversity.

### ➤ **We promote equality - we believe it's the right thing to do**

Research shows that more equal societies are better for everyone<sup>1</sup>. Our College is a reflection of wider society so if we promote equality, that will be better for all of us. Equality is about being valued for who and what we are. This helps us to achieve our best without unfair obstacles or stereotyping, or being restricted by anyone's expectations of our ability. This means:

- **ACCESS**

Being able to get to, into and around the College, and complete the learning journey, with *equal ease and dignity*

- **TREATMENT**

Having a *sense of belonging* – a place where we fit in, are welcome and can express ourselves in our own way

- **SERVICE**

Feeling the place, the programmes, the policies have been *designed with us all in mind*

### ➤ **We value diversity - it makes the College a more creative place to learn and work**

We celebrate the fact that our students and staff, our partners and supporters, are from different social and ethnic backgrounds; women, men and trans gender; black and white; of all ages, cultures and faiths; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and straight; disabled and non-disabled; from nearby and further afield.

Seeing people like ourselves around increases our sense of belonging.

We believe:

- Diverse teams make better decisions and produce richer experiences.
- Listening to different points-of-view improves how we do things.
- Valuing our differences, as well as the things we have in common, strengthens inclusion.

### ➤ **We make sure that those with less have an equal chance of success**

Equality is not just about who and what we are. It is also about **inequality** - the gap between those who have more than enough in life to get by, and those who may not have enough. This is not just about income. It's also about life chances and circumstances such as the well-being and success of young people leaving care, those from homes without much money, and those whose life circumstances are particularly difficult.

Equality and diversity is strengthened by our promotion of **British values** of democracy and the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

<sup>1</sup> [www.theequalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.theequalitytrust.org.uk)

# 1 Students and studying

Because we champion equality and diversity, all our courses give you:

- An unbiased insight into the subject
- Learning that starts with your own lives and experiences
- A global rather than a narrow perspective
- Skills for a sustainable future and a world with a changing climate

And readiness for a world of work where:

- Diverse teams are normal
- Team-work is highly prized
- Tolerance and respect are essential
- Flexible, creative and open minds have the edge
- You understand your rights as well as your responsibilities

Equality means respect for others, and solidarity with those who may need a bit more looking after. **Harassment, bullying<sup>2</sup> and mockery are not tolerated** - either face-to-face, behind people's backs or on social media - even if you say '*It was only a joke*'.

When you enrol, we talk through your whole learning journey, checking you can join in every aspect of the course with ease and dignity.

**We guarantee you a safe, enjoyable, and challenging learning experience.**

Ours is a College where, for example:

- Women and men study together on everything from construction to child care
- Gay, straight, bi, trans and non-binary students all look out for each other
- Disabled students feel safe and included all the time
- No one is judged on their appearance
- Different beliefs are respected
- Learners' voices are heard loud and clear
- Trips out are affordable because lack of money is never an obstacle to doing well
- Lessons are hard work and enjoyable, inclusive and mature

**What does excellence look like?**

- ✓ **Students are respected, included and well-looked after by their teachers and by each other**
- ✓ **Students know about equality and the environment as it relates to their course**
- ✓ **Students can work successfully in diverse teams**

---

<sup>2</sup> See also the *Dignity at Work policy*

## 2 Staff and working

Because we promote equality and diversity, the College:

- Treats all of us with respect and dignity
- Values our work and takes our concerns seriously
- Promotes a healthy and considerate balance between work and our lives outside work

We know diverse teams produce more creative thinking, sharper problem-solving and better results all round. We support positive action to increase the diversity of the staff.

We know that racism, sexism and any form of discrimination can intrude into the workplace in both blatant and subtle ways. To counter this possibility, we promote a culture where, for example:

- Banter about who or what we are is not acceptable
- Minority ethnic staff are not assumed to be cultural experts
- Sexualized talk about women and men does not happen
- Using 'gay' as an insult is not tolerated
- Trans staff and students are supported and treated with respect
- No one is put down in public – even when they may be wrong

**Harassment and bullying<sup>3</sup> are not tolerated in any form, even under the guise of 'getting the job done'.**

**And institutional bullying, that is, unreasonable workloads and impossible targets justified by reduced resources, is as unacceptable as more traditional forms of bullying.**

Reporting aggressive managers and staff is encouraged and valued.

So, ours is a College where, for example:

- Realistic deadlines are negotiated with consideration for others
- Flexible and innovative ways of working are encouraged – for all staff
- Line-management is honest, open and supportive – and staff are accountable
- Opportunities for promotion and development are transparent and fair

**Equality, diversity and inclusion are everyone's responsibility.**

**What does excellence look like?**

- ✓ **Staff contribute to an open and honest, supportive and inclusive culture**
- ✓ **Policies and ways-of-working which promote equality and value diversity**
- ✓ **Staff have the support and the skill to integrate equality into their work**

---

<sup>3</sup> See also the *Dignity at Work Policy*

### 3 Leadership and managing

Places where the gap between the rich and poor is smallest are better for all of us<sup>4</sup>.

**Inequality** is about the social and economic gap between the haves and have-nots.

Promoting equality is about helping close this gap and having a more equitable share for all.

#### ❖ **Closing the inequality gap**

At the College, **equality** is about the access, treatment and services we provide. It is also about tackling **inequality** where we can – reducing the gap between those who have more than enough, and those who have less, and making sure everyone has sufficient to work, live and learn with dignity.

Ours is a College where, for example:

- Resources are used to combat inequality – for both students and staff
- Our remuneration policy and pay rates reflect our commitment to reducing inequality e.g. support for the London Living Wage, and fair differentials between pay scales
- Contracts of employment model fair, respectful and equitable practice
- No 16-18 year old student is excluded from course extras because of lack of money, and support is extended to adult learners too

#### ❖ **Leadership from the top**

Senior managers take the lead on equality and diversity. They assess the impact of how well their plans and decisions promote equality and diversity,

This means managers, for example, who:

- Start and finish meetings on time
- Treat others as they themselves wish to be treated
- Meet staff 1:1 on a regular basis
- Do what they say they'll do - and tackle problems swiftly
- Are clear and consistent – because the opposite can be undermining
- Use a collaborative and consultative style – to encourage more creative results

We consult with others so our decision-making is inclusive.

*'Any manager writing a policy without consultation must do so because they believe ordinary people could not possibly add anything to their perfect decision-making.'*<sup>5</sup>

#### **What does excellence look like?**

- ✓ **Clear and vocal leadership by managers on equality and diversity**
- ✓ **Collaborative management throughout the College**
- ✓ **Accountable plans to promote equality, increase diversity and reduce inequality**

---

<sup>4</sup> [www.theequalitytrust.org](http://www.theequalitytrust.org)

<sup>5</sup> Laura McInerney, The Education Guardian 16 July 2013

## 4 Local community and procurement

Every year, the College procures services from other organisations – including builders, engineers, office suppliers etc. And we work in partnership with a large number of local employers on apprenticeship schemes.

As one of the largest employers in the Twickenham area, we play a significant role in the local economy.

**We are well placed to promote our values beyond the boundaries of the College.**

The Equality Act 2010 requires us to promote equality through the services we procure<sup>6</sup>.

This means we give preference to contractors and employers who share our values, and can show, for example:

- A guarantee on the well-being of our students, and protecting them from harassment and discrimination
- A commitment to fair and just employment practices – including wages levels and equal pay for women and men
- Evidence of ethical practices in relation to the environment and sustainability
- Involvement with the local community and a commitment to training young people

Our priority in commissioning or contracting services is to always consider working with small local companies owned or part-owned by women, minority ethnic, LGBTQ\* and disabled people – because these are the groups who often find it harder to compete in the world of business.

[\*Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans gender, queer]

### **What does excellence look like?**

- ✓ **Doing business with firms which actively promote equality and diversity**
- ✓ **Partnerships which benefit the local community**
- ✓ **Working with other employers to promote equitable and environmental best practice**

## 5 Places and spaces – our environment

We champion inclusive design as this is how equality is applied to the built environment - our buildings, and the spaces around them.

Inclusive design is about making sure places and spaces are welcoming and easy to use.

This means we involve as many different people as possible in the planning and design, maintenance and management of our places and spaces.

It's about being an organisation that values collaboration and uses diverse perspectives to improve how we do things.

Inclusive design is not just about the finished product. It's about how we get to the finished product. Wide and imaginative consultation leads to better results.

We take our slogan from the international disability rights movement:

***Nothing about us without us***

An inclusive environment means, for example:

- Staff who think-through the whole of your learning journey before enrolling you
- Autism-friendly learning spaces
- Use of assistive technologies
- Entrances designed for people with sight and mobility impairment
- Classrooms with excellent acoustics
- Dyslexia sensitive web-site
- *Changing places* toilets at each site
- Adequate space for the number of learners to study with ease
- Classrooms laid-out for people using wheelchairs

Ours is a College where, for example:

- A wide range of people are engaged in plans for refurbishment and the design of new buildings
- Professional Access Audits influence our building plans
- You will not hear us say: *'Access is a budget issue'*

Not every space will be accessible to everyone but we will do our utmost to make it so

### **What does excellence look like?**

- ✚ **Wide consultation and acting on what we hear - with inclusive results**
- ✚ **Creative and imaginative solutions to design dilemmas**
- ✚ **State-of-the-art places and spaces which work for everyone**

## 6 Our equality priorities

Our duty is protection from discrimination or harassment on the basis of eight characteristics: age, race, class, gender, gender identity, religion / belief, sexuality and disability.

Disability covers physical and sensory impairment, learning disability and difficulty, mental health and neuro-diverse conditions [such as autism, dyspraxia etc.].

This equality statement includes protection against discrimination on the basis of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity and paternity.

It also covers poverty and deprivation, health and well-being, and safety in public spaces, as well as other life factors which carry stigma and stereotype such as HIV status, unemployment and under-employment, residency status and asylum, ability in language and literacy etc.

We also work to reduce inequality between those that have more and those that have least.

The statement prioritizes the welfare and success of young people leaving care, those who are care-givers, and those from very poor homes or whose life circumstances are particularly difficult.

*All these characteristics and situations are covered by this statement*

## 7 Our College values

Equality and diversity underpin our purpose *to drive aspiration, ambition and achievement*.

Our values promote equality and British values:

✓ **Mutual respect**

We will respect the rights, differences and dignity of others regardless of their circumstance and allow individuals to achieve their potential

✓ **Honesty**

We will act with openness and transparency at all times

✓ **Integrity**

We will act with integrity at all times

✓ **Personal Accountability**

We take responsibility for our individual behaviour

You will know us by how well we nurture and fulfil the aspirations, ambitions and achievements of our learners and staff.

## 8 The legal context

Because the College receives public funds, we are bound by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty<sup>7</sup>. This requires us, in all we do, to have due regard to the need to:

### 1 Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment.

Some examples from other places:

- A pay audit reveals significant differentials in take-home pay between two staff teams doing different jobs but jobs of equal worth: one team – mostly men, and another team – mostly women. An action plan is drawn up to change the women's pay rate.
- A trans student is recommended by a local firm not to do an apprenticeship because 'she is likely to be bullied'. The College works with the firm to ensure there is a safe and supportive environment.

### 2 Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Some examples from other places:

- Focus groups of disabled staff, students and others advise us on how to make the design of the new College building inclusive.
- Additional tutorial time helps close the results gap between young men and women on 'A' level science courses.

### 3 Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Some examples from other places:

- Facts are included in some courses about the history and lives of Traveller communities and the ways in which they are stigmatised – follow negative news reports on local TV.
- Activities involving both staff and students on World Mental Health Day to counter stereotypes of mental illness.

---

<sup>7</sup> 'What the equality law means for you as an education provider – further and higher education'. Equality & Human Rights Commission 2011

## 9 How we organise equality and diversity in the College

Equality and diversity are managed by the Principal and his team. There is an Equality and Diversity Group. This group researches and promotes best practice, and helps write the annual Equality action plan. Four Equality Innovators help us keep the issues in the spotlight.

The purpose of this statement is to define what we mean by equality and diversity, to promote best practice, and to guide our compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and relevant legislation.

**Drafted in consultation with staff, students and employers, December 2015**