

1. Vision, Ethos, and Purpose

Fox Wood School and College is a 4-19 special school community profoundly committed to the holistic development of every learner. We believe that equality must permeate all aspects of school life; it is not a "tick-box" exercise but a fundamental principle that is the responsibility of every community member. Our core mission is to nurture a community where diversity is accepted, respected, valued, and celebrated.

At Fox Wood, we recognise that achieving true equality of opportunity does not simply mean treating everyone the same. It requires a nuanced understanding of the specific barriers that lead to unequal outcomes and a commitment to actively tackling them so that every individual can develop their full potential—socially, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually.

Our Commitment to a Zero-Tolerance Environment

Fox Wood School maintains a zero-tolerance approach to any behaviour judged to be discriminatory. We are committed to challenging and eliminating such behaviour in all its guises—whether written, verbal, physical, or emotional abuse, including bullying and harassment. We ensure all members of the school community are valued within a context of absolute mutual respect, justice, and fairness.

2. Statutory Framework and Local Integration

This policy is designed to meet the rigorous requirements of UK education law and reflects the school's "best endeavours" to support learners with complex needs. The legal drivers include:

- * The Equality Act 2010: The single, consolidated source of discrimination law.
- * The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED): Requiring schools to have "due regard" to eliminate discrimination, advance opportunity, and foster good relations.
- * The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023: Statutory duty to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
- * The SEND Code of Practice 2015: Statutory guidance for the 0-25 age range.
- * The Children and Families Act 2014: Supporting participation and high aspirations for SEND learners.

The Warrington Context

Fox Wood School operates in full alignment with the Warrington Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028. This includes two critical local adoptions:

1. Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic: We treat "care experience" (including foster care, residential care, or kinship care with relatives/friends) as a protected characteristic. This includes "Care Leavers" (aged 16-25) who were looked after at some point since age 14.

2. The Socio-Economic Duty: Pursuant to Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, we proactively address structural inequalities and economic uncertainty to deliver better outcomes for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

3. Comprehensive Equality Statement

Protected Characteristics

It is unlawful to discriminate against anyone based on the following characteristics.

Age

Disability

Gender Reassignment

Marriage & Civil Partnership

Pregnancy & Maternity

Race

Religion or Belief

Sex

Sexual Orientation

Care Experience

Socio-Economic Status

The "Due Regard" Decision-Making Framework

Fox Wood complies with the PSED by ensuring that "due regard" is not an afterthought but a decision-making framework. In accordance with Chapter 5.4 of the DfE advice, we exercise this duty seriously, rigorously, and with an open mind to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
2. Advance equality of opportunity by removing disadvantages and meeting specific needs.
3. Foster good relations by promoting tolerance and friendship.

Definitions of Unlawful Behaviour

* Direct Discrimination: Treating a person less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic.

* Indirect Discrimination: Applying a general practice that disadvantages a particular group, unless it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

- * Harassment: Unwanted conduct related to a characteristic that violates dignity or creates an offensive environment.
- * Victimisation: Treating someone less favourably.
- * Discrimination by Association: Discriminating against a pupil because of someone they are associated with.
- * Discrimination by Perception: Discriminating because of a characteristic a person is thought to have.

4. Special Provisions for Fox Wood Learners

As a special school, we integrate the SEND Code of Practice 2015 to ensure that "different treatment" facilitates true equality.

- * Reasonable Adjustments and the Anticipatory Duty: Our duty to adjust is anticipatory. We do not wait for a barrier to be identified; we proactively plan to prevent disadvantage. This includes providing auxiliary aids and services (e.g., adaptive keyboards, special software) where these are not already provided via an EHC plan.
- * The Graduated Approach: We utilise the "Assess, Plan, Do, Review" cycle to identify needs early, ensuring our "best endeavours" meet the legal threshold for provision.
- * Curriculum: Content vs. Delivery: While the content of the curriculum is exempt from discrimination the delivery is strictly regulated. We ensure teaching styles, language, and resources never belittle or exclude pupils.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- * The Responsible Body (Governing Body): Holds ultimate legal liability for compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Worker Protection Act 2023. The Responsible Body is liable for the actions of employees unless it can demonstrate it took "all reasonable steps" to prevent discrimination. Equality considerations must be a standing item in policy minutes.
- * The Head Teacher: Responsible for the daily promotion of equality; ensures the graduated approach is effective; provides an annual EDI report to the Governors.
- * Staff (Teaching and Support): Must model respect; provide differentiated learning; use inclusive communication systems (e.g., PECS/Sign); and administer rewards and sanctions without bias.
- * The School Community: Parents and pupils are expected to show mutual respect and engage with the school's Local Offer.

6. Employment and Worker Protection

Fox Wood is an inclusive employer. We comply with Section 60 of the Equality Act by not asking health-related questions before a job offer is made, unless it relates to an intrinsic function of the role. Any such questions are targeted and relevant.

Pursuant to the Worker Protection Act 2023, we take proactive "reasonable steps" to prevent sexual harassment. We further commit to Warrington's priority of providing targeted support for neurodivergent staff, including management training and awareness-raising initiatives.

7. Monitoring, Review, and Accessibility

* Individual and Group Monitoring: Pupil progress is monitored via the Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy. We analyse data to check for disadvantage at both the individual learner level and for specific groups (e.g., by race, sex, or socio-economic status).

* Accessibility Plan: We maintain a standalone Accessibility Plan addressing the physical environment, curriculum access, and the provision of information in alternative formats.

* Review Cycle: This policy and its objectives are reviewed every four years, with equality information updated and published on the school website annually to ensure transparency for the local community.