



Orange Tree School

Equality Policy 2026 - 2027

Orange Tree School Main Site and Ridgeway Hospital Provision



DOCUMENT DETAILS	
Applies to:	All pupils, employees, agency staff, volunteers, contractors, visitors, parents and carers across Orange Tree School Main Site and Ridgeway Hospital Provision.
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Equality Policy Summary

Purpose

Orange Tree School is committed to promoting equality, inclusion and respect across all aspects of school life.

This policy explains how the school seeks to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster positive relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

It applies to Orange Tree School as:

- a provider of education;
- an employer;
- a therapeutic setting; and
- a member of the wider community.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to:

- all pupils;
- employees and agency staff;
- applicants for employment;
- volunteers;
- contractors and visitors;
- parents and carers;
- Advisory Board members; and
- partner agencies working with the school.

Our Principles

Orange Tree School believes that:

- every person should be treated with dignity, fairness and respect;
- discrimination, harassment and victimisation are unacceptable;
- equality does not always mean treating everyone in exactly the same way;
- barriers to participation, learning and employment should be identified and removed wherever reasonably possible;
- reasonable adjustments are essential to ensuring fair access and meaningful participation;
- neurodiversity, disability, culture, identity and individual difference should be understood and respected;
- safeguarding and equality responsibilities are closely connected; and
- all members of the school community share responsibility for promoting inclusion.

Our Approach

As a specialist therapeutic school, Orange Tree School recognises that pupils and staff may require different forms of support in order to access the same opportunities.

The school therefore seeks to achieve equality by:

- understanding individual needs;
- making reasonable adjustments;

- adapting communication, environments and approaches;
- promoting inclusive teaching and therapeutic practice;
- challenging discriminatory language and behaviour;
- preventing prejudice-based bullying;
- ensuring fair access to examinations and qualifications; and
- monitoring whether policies and practices create unintended barriers.

Equality at Orange Tree School is not achieved by treating everyone identically. It is achieved by ensuring that each person has fair access to opportunities, support and participation.

Protected Characteristics

The school will not unlawfully discriminate because of:

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

The school also opposes discrimination connected with SEND, learning difficulty, English as an additional language, looked-after status, socioeconomic disadvantage or any other circumstance that may create barriers or vulnerability.

Reporting Concerns

Concerns about discrimination, harassment, victimisation or unequal treatment should be reported promptly.

Concerns involving pupils will be managed through the appropriate safeguarding, anti-bullying, relationship and behaviour, complaints or other relevant procedures.

Concerns involving staff will be managed through the appropriate grievance, disciplinary, whistleblowing or employment procedures.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance or School practice.

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1. Introduction

Orange Tree School is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful and supportive environment in which every member of the school community is valued and treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

As a specialist therapeutic school, we recognise that equality is achieved not by treating everyone identically, but by understanding individual needs, removing barriers and providing appropriate support to enable every pupil and member of staff to participate fully in school life.

We are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering positive relationships between people from all backgrounds and with different experiences. Equality, diversity and inclusion are integral to our therapeutic ethos and underpin our approach to education, safeguarding, wellbeing, employment and leadership.

Orange Tree School celebrates diversity and recognises that every individual brings unique strengths, experiences and perspectives to our community. We are committed to creating a culture in which difference is respected, inclusion is actively promoted and everyone feels safe, welcomed and able to achieve their potential.

The principles within this policy apply to all aspects of School life, including admissions, education, therapeutic provision, behaviour support, safeguarding, employment, recruitment and engagement with families, visitors and partner agencies.

This policy should be read alongside the School's Admissions Policy, Relationship and Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, SEND Policy, Accessibility Plan, Complaints Policy and other related policies.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed with regard to the requirements of:

- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Children Act 1989 and 2004;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0–25 years;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (current edition);
- Independent School Standards Regulations;
- Education Act 2011 (where applicable); and
- other relevant statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education.

The school recognises that equality, safeguarding and inclusion are closely linked. Promoting equality and preventing discrimination contribute to safeguarding children, supporting their

wellbeing and ensuring that all pupils are able to access education in a safe and supportive environment.

Orange Tree School will fulfil its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 by:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- fostering good relations between different groups within the school community.

In implementing this policy, the school will have particular regard to the need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, staff and visitors and to remove barriers that may prevent individuals from participating fully in School life.

3. Principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Orange Tree School believes that equality, diversity and inclusion are fundamental to providing an outstanding therapeutic education. These principles underpin every aspect of School life, including admissions, teaching, therapeutic practice, safeguarding, behaviour support, employment and leadership.

The school recognises that treating everyone fairly does not always mean treating everyone in exactly the same way. Pupils and staff have different experiences, strengths, needs and circumstances, and achieving equality may require different levels or types of support, reasonable adjustments or individualised approaches.

As a specialist therapeutic school, Orange Tree School is committed to creating an environment in which every individual:

- feels safe, respected and valued;
- is able to participate fully in School life;
- is supported to achieve their potential;
- is free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- has their individuality recognised and respected; and
- is encouraged to develop positive, respectful relationships with others.

The school recognises that many pupils have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), neurodevelopmental differences, communication needs, mental health needs or experiences of trauma. These factors may influence how pupils communicate, regulate their emotions, develop relationships and access learning.

Equality therefore requires staff to exercise professional judgement, make reasonable adjustments and adapt their practice to meet individual needs whilst maintaining high expectations and promoting inclusion for all.

The school is committed to fostering a culture in which diversity is recognised as a strength. Pupils are supported to develop respect, empathy, acceptance and an appreciation of different backgrounds, identities, beliefs and experiences through the curriculum, therapeutic interventions and everyday interactions within the school community.

3.1 Equality in a Specialist Therapeutic School

Orange Tree School recognises that equality is closely linked to inclusion and accessibility.

Equality in practice may include:

- making reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment;
- adapting communication to meet individual needs;
- providing therapeutic support where appropriate;
- removing barriers to participation;
- ensuring fair access to the curriculum, enrichment activities and examinations;
- supporting pupils through periods of emotional distress or mental ill health;
- promoting positive relationships through restorative practice; and
- working collaboratively with families and external professionals to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils.

The school recognises that these approaches do not provide unfair advantage. Rather, they enable pupils to access education and participate in School life as equitably as possible.

4. Protected Characteristics and Unlawful Discrimination

Orange Tree School is committed to ensuring that no pupil, member of staff, parent, carer, visitor or applicant is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

The school will take all reasonable steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to promote a culture in which diversity is respected and valued.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age (in relation to employment);
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership (in relation to employment);
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

The school also recognises that some individuals may experience disadvantage or barriers arising from circumstances that are not protected characteristics under the Equality Act but remain important within a specialist educational setting. These may include, for example:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);
- neurodiversity;
- speech, language and communication needs;
- mental health needs;
- children looked after or previously looked after;
- young carers;
- English as an Additional Language (EAL);
- socioeconomic disadvantage; and
- adverse childhood experiences or trauma.

Whilst these circumstances are not all protected characteristics in law, Orange Tree School recognises that they may create barriers to participation and achievement. The school will seek to remove those barriers wherever reasonably possible through inclusive practice, reasonable adjustments and individualised support.

4.1 Forms of Unlawful Discrimination

Orange Tree School will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- direct discrimination;
- indirect discrimination;
- harassment;
- victimisation;
- discrimination arising from disability;
- failure to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people; and
- discriminatory bullying or prejudice-based behaviour.

Concerns relating to discrimination will always be taken seriously and investigated fairly in accordance with the appropriate School policies.

Where concerns also constitute bullying, child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding matter, they will be managed in accordance with the School's Anti-Bullying Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

4.2 Reasonable Adjustments

Orange Tree School recognises its duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, staff and visitors in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Reasonable adjustments may include, where appropriate:

- adapting teaching and learning approaches;
- modifying communication methods;
- providing specialist equipment or technology;
- adjusting the physical environment;
- adapting examination arrangements;
- providing therapeutic support;
- adjusting routines or timetables; and
- making other reasonable changes to enable individuals to participate fully in School life.

Decisions regarding reasonable adjustments will always be based on individual need, professional judgement and, where appropriate, advice from external professionals.

The school recognises that reasonable adjustments are intended to remove barriers and promote equality of opportunity. They do not provide unfair advantage but enable individuals to access education, employment and School life on an equitable basis.

5. Equality in Practice

Orange Tree School seeks to promote equality through every aspect of School life. Equality is not viewed as a separate responsibility but is embedded within decision-making, teaching, therapeutic practice, safeguarding, employment and leadership.

The school recognises that inclusion requires continual reflection upon whether its policies, procedures and everyday practice remove barriers and promote meaningful participation for all members of the school community.

5.1 Admissions

Admissions decisions are made fairly, transparently and in accordance with the School's Admissions Policy.

The school considers each application individually, taking into account the young person's needs, the suitability of the provision and the school's ability to provide an appropriate education whilst maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the wider School community.

The school does not unlawfully discriminate during the admissions process and will make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

5.2 Teaching, Learning and Therapeutic Practice

Orange Tree School recognises that pupils learn in different ways and may require different levels of support in order to achieve positive outcomes.

Staff adapt teaching, communication and therapeutic approaches to meet individual needs and to promote meaningful participation in learning.

Reasonable adjustments, therapeutic interventions and individualised support are used to remove barriers whilst maintaining high expectations for all pupils.

5.3 Safeguarding and Wellbeing

The school recognises that promoting equality is an important part of safeguarding.

Staff remain alert to the additional vulnerabilities that some pupils may experience because of disability, protected characteristics, communication needs, trauma, mental health or other individual circumstances.

All safeguarding concerns will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

5.4 Relationships and Behaviour

The school promotes positive relationships through therapeutic practice, restorative approaches and the consistent modelling of respectful behaviour.

Behaviour support is informed by the Relationship and Behaviour Policy, recognising that pupils may require different strategies and reasonable adjustments whilst maintaining clear expectations regarding safety, respect and inclusion.

5.5 Preventing Discrimination

Orange Tree School will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or prejudice-based behaviour.

Concerns will be investigated promptly and managed in accordance with the Anti-Bullying Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and other relevant procedures.

5.6 Working with Families

The school values positive partnerships with parents and carers.

Families are encouraged to work collaboratively with the school to promote inclusion, respect and equality.

Where concerns arise, the school will investigate fairly and explain the actions being taken whilst respecting confidentiality and the rights of all individuals involved.

6. Equality in Employment

Orange Tree School is committed to providing equality of opportunity throughout the employment lifecycle. Recruitment, selection, induction, training, promotion and employment practices will be conducted fairly, transparently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant employment legislation.

The school seeks to create an inclusive working environment in which all employees are treated with dignity and respect and are able to contribute fully to the life of the school.

Orange Tree School values the expertise, knowledge and professional judgement of its employees. Equality includes ensuring that staff are supported to develop their professional skills, contribute their expertise and work collaboratively in an environment where all voices are respected and valued.

6.1 Recruitment and Selection

The school is committed to recruiting, appointing and retaining staff on the basis of their skills, experience, qualifications and suitability for the role.

Recruitment processes will:

- be fair, transparent and objective;
- comply with safer recruitment requirements;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- avoid unlawful discrimination;
- make reasonable adjustments for applicants where appropriate; and
- ensure that appointments are based on merit and the ability to fulfil the requirements of the role.

The school welcomes applications from individuals with diverse backgrounds and recognises the value that diversity brings to the workforce.

6.2 Staff Support and Professional Development

Orange Tree School is committed to ensuring that all staff have fair access to:

- induction;
- supervision;
- appraisal;
- professional development;
- training;
- promotion opportunities; and
- wellbeing support.

Opportunities will be provided without unlawful discrimination and will take account of reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

The school recognises that staff wellbeing contributes to equality of opportunity. Where appropriate, reasonable support and adjustments will be considered to enable employees to undertake their roles safely and effectively whilst maintaining the needs of the School and its pupils.

6.3 Dignity at Work

All employees have the right to work in an environment that is safe, respectful and free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

The school expects all staff to:

- demonstrate professionalism;
- treat colleagues, pupils, families and visitors with dignity and respect;
- challenge discriminatory behaviour where appropriate;
- contribute to an inclusive working environment; and
- model the values expected of pupils.

Concerns relating to discrimination, bullying or harassment involving staff will be managed in accordance with the appropriate employment policies.

Orange Tree School recognises that employees may hold differing personal beliefs, opinions and backgrounds. Staff are expected to treat one another respectfully and professionally, even where views differ, provided those views are expressed lawfully and do not conflict with the school's legal responsibilities or professional standards.

6.4 Raising Concerns

The school encourages staff to raise concerns promptly where they believe they have experienced, witnessed or become aware of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. No employee will suffer detriment for raising a genuine concern about discrimination, harassment or victimisation in good faith.

Concerns may be raised through:

- line management;
- the Headteacher;
- the grievance procedure;
- the whistleblowing procedure; or
- other appropriate reporting routes.

All concerns will be considered fairly, sensitively and, where appropriate, confidentially.

7. Equality for Pupils

Orange Tree School is committed to ensuring that every pupil has equitable access to education, therapeutic support and opportunities to achieve their potential.

The school recognises that pupils learn, communicate and develop in different ways. Equality is therefore promoted by understanding individual needs, making reasonable adjustments and removing barriers to participation whilst maintaining high expectations for all pupils.

Pupils are encouraged to develop respect, empathy, kindness and an appreciation of diversity through everyday interactions, therapeutic practice and the wider curriculum.

7.1 Curriculum and Learning

The curriculum promotes equality, diversity, inclusion and respect for others.

Through teaching, learning and therapeutic opportunities, pupils are supported to:

- understand and respect difference;
- challenge prejudice and stereotypes;
- develop empathy and emotional understanding;
- recognise discrimination and know how to report concerns;
- appreciate different cultures, beliefs and life experiences;
- develop confidence, resilience and self-esteem; and
- become responsible and respectful members of society.

Teaching materials and learning opportunities seek to reflect a diverse society and encourage pupils to think critically, respectfully and compassionately.

Orange Tree School is committed to presenting pupils with balanced and age-appropriate information that supports critical thinking and respectful discussion. Staff must not promote partisan political views in the teaching of any subject or through their professional role. Where political, social or current affairs are discussed, pupils will be supported to consider a balanced range of viewpoints in accordance with the Independent School Standards. Staff are expected to distinguish clearly between their personal opinions and their professional responsibilities, recognising that personal political views should not influence teaching or interactions with pupils.

7.2 Personal Development

Equality is promoted through the school's wider personal development curriculum, including:

- PSHE;
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE);
- therapeutic interventions;
- SMSC development;
- British Values;

- assemblies;
- enrichment activities; and
- everyday interactions within the school community.

These opportunities help pupils develop positive relationships, understand their rights and responsibilities and value diversity within modern British society.

7.3 Participation and Inclusion

Orange Tree School seeks to ensure that all pupils can participate fully in School life.

Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments may be made to support participation in:

- lessons;
- educational visits;
- enrichment activities;
- therapeutic provision;
- examinations;
- school events; and
- other aspects of School life.

Staff will work collaboratively with pupils, parents, carers and external professionals to identify and remove barriers wherever reasonably possible.

7.4 Respectful Relationships

The school promotes a culture of mutual respect in which discriminatory language, prejudice, harassment, victimisation and bullying are not tolerated.

Where concerns arise, staff will respond promptly, fairly and proportionately in accordance with the:

- Relationship and Behaviour Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; and
- other relevant School procedures.

Responses will seek to safeguard pupils, promote understanding and support positive relationships through therapeutic and restorative practice.

7.5 Equality in Examinations and Assessment

Orange Tree School is committed to ensuring that pupils have fair and equitable access to examinations and assessments.

Reasonable adjustments will be implemented where appropriate and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations.

The school will work collaboratively with pupils, families and professionals to ensure that examination arrangements enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills whilst maintaining the integrity of the assessment process.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion is a shared responsibility. Every member of the Orange Tree School community has a role in creating an environment where all individuals are treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

8.1 The Proprietor and Advisory Board

The Proprietor and Advisory Board are responsible for:

- ensuring that the school complies with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Independent School Standards;
- promoting a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion;
- ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place;
- monitoring equality-related matters as part of the school's governance arrangements; and
- reviewing this policy at appropriate intervals.

8.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school;
- promoting an inclusive culture;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate training and guidance;
- overseeing equality-related concerns and complaints;
- ensuring reasonable adjustments are considered and implemented where appropriate;
- monitoring the effectiveness of equality practice across the School; and
- ensuring equality considerations inform strategic decision-making.

8.3 Senior Leaders

Senior leaders are responsible for:

- modelling inclusive leadership;
- ensuring employment decisions are based upon merit, professional judgement and the needs of the school, free from unlawful discrimination;
- supporting staff to implement this policy;
- monitoring equality within their areas of responsibility;
- ensuring barriers to participation are identified and addressed;

- promoting inclusive practice through teaching, therapeutic provision and leadership; and
- supporting staff in responding appropriately to equality-related concerns.

8.4 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- treating every individual with dignity, fairness and respect;
- promoting equality and inclusion through their professional practice;
- making reasonable adjustments where appropriate and within their role;
- challenging discrimination, harassment, victimisation and prejudice;
- reporting concerns promptly;
- modelling respectful language and behaviour;
- maintaining professional impartiality in accordance with School policies; and
- continually developing their understanding of equality, diversity and inclusive practice.

8.5 Pupils

Pupils are encouraged to:

- treat others with kindness and respect;
- celebrate difference;
- challenge prejudice appropriately;
- report concerns to a trusted adult;
- contribute to an inclusive School community; and
- demonstrate the Orange Tree Values in their relationships with others.

8.6 Parents and Carers

Orange Tree School values positive partnerships with parents and carers.

Parents and carers are encouraged to:

- support the school's commitment to equality and inclusion;
- work collaboratively with staff;
- raise concerns respectfully and promptly;
- support pupils in developing respectful relationships; and
- recognise that the school's decisions will be based upon professional judgement, the evidence available and the individual needs of those involved.

The school recognises that parents naturally advocate for their own child. Where concerns arise, the school will investigate fairly, explain its decision-making and work collaboratively with families to achieve positive outcomes wherever possible.

9. Monitoring, Complaints and Review

Orange Tree School is committed to continually reviewing its practice to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion remain embedded throughout the school.

9.1 Monitoring

The school will monitor the implementation of this policy through:

- policy review;
- safeguarding and wellbeing monitoring;
- recruitment and employment practices;
- pupil outcomes and participation;
- equality-related concerns and complaints;
- staff training; and
- ongoing quality assurance activities.

Monitoring enables the school to identify barriers, evaluate the effectiveness of its practice and promote continuous improvement.

9.2 Complaints

Concerns relating to equality, discrimination or victimisation should be raised with the school as soon as possible.

Where concerns cannot be resolved informally, they will be managed in accordance with the School's Complaints Policy or, for staff, the appropriate employment procedures.

All concerns will be considered fairly, objectively and confidentially, taking account of the rights and dignity of all individuals involved.

9.3 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are:

- changes to legislation;
- updated statutory guidance;
- significant organisational change; or
- lessons learned from complaints, incidents or quality assurance activities.

10. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following School policies:

- Admissions Policy

- Relationship and Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Attendance Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- AI Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy