



Equality & Diversity Policy

2025/26

Academic Year

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1. SCOPE OF POLICY

Sandwell College is committed to creating a positive and harmonious learning environment where learners regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender and learning difficulties or disabilities their parents and guardians, staff, governors, community members and other stakeholders benefit equally from the services of the College. The College aims to help all its learners to benefit from the education and training services of the college to improve their life chances and lead fulfilling lives. These could be progression to further education, university, an apprenticeship and employment. The college will do so by celebrating and promoting equality and diversity in all its activities.

This policy will cover the College as a provider of high-quality education and training where students, regardless of their previous learning experiences, will thrive and achieve their objectives to transform their lives.

As an employer, the College will ensure that no job applicant is treated less favourably and work towards fully reflecting the communities that it serves. All employees will be offered fair and equitable chances of staff development, fair assessment and appraisal as well as opportunity for progression and development.

We will work towards achieving the following:

- A richly diverse staff and student body reflecting ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs in society
- Equivalent levels of satisfaction and success rates for all groups of students
- Good progression rates for all categories of students
- Narrowing the achievement gap by taking steps to promote equality of outcomes

2. POLICY SUMMARY

Sandwell College is clear in its intent to create a place where everyone, whatever their circumstances and/or background:

- is fully respected
- is listened to and encouraged to give their views
- feels welcome
- is treated in a fair and friendly way
- has equality of opportunity and outcome
- has full access to all activities wherever possible

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2.1 The general duty

The College fully embraces legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and will seek to ensure that it meets its general and specific duties including to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act

Eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity involves:

- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in activities and programmes where their participation is disproportionately low
- acknowledging that bullying, harassment and discrimination affects learners and staff from each protected characteristics and taking steps to eliminate harassment and discrimination
- Promoting positive attitudes towards each protected characteristics, for example towards women, ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, a n d / o r a learning difficulty such as dyslexia, autism; people of certain age groups or religious beliefs, transsexual people, lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

3. MONITORING EQUALITY (Equality Analysis)

The College will conduct a comprehensive monitoring of experiences of staff and the student body. These will be conducted via the Learners Quality and Curriculum Committee and the Equality sub groups.

Monitoring will be undertaken in accordance with best practice recommendations, particularly from bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission and with regard to data protection principles. The outcomes of such monitoring will be reported on to the Executive Management Team and the Governing Body.

Equality Analysis (formerly Equality Impact Assessment) is an assessment of a current or proposed policy to see whether it has or m i g h t have a different impact on individuals or groups of individuals based on the protected characteristics in the Equality Act. Policies are monitored to determine their level of impact on College staff, students and the local community, and policies that affect core functions of the College have all been impact assessed.

If any constraints or inequalities are identified, action will be taken. Amendments will be made if the policy is deemed to have or potentially have an adverse effect or is not accessible to any group of individuals.

3.1 Employment

The College is committed to the collection of statistics, analysis of data and presentation of data as well as monitoring on an annual basis as employment policy and practices change.

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The College will use the two main forms of monitoring, i.e. of the composition of the existing workforce and the recruitment and selection process, looking at the workforce with reference to age, race, ethnicity, disability and gender in particular.

The College will also categorise staff according to grade; contract type, i.e. whether full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary; length of time in post; place of work and salary. Records will also be kept of training, performance reviews, promotions, regrading and discretionary pay awards.

After the employment relationship has ended, the College may retain statistics; data about the composition of the workforce, including appraisal and promotion records for the purpose of carrying out equality and diversity monitoring, and may also look at reasons for resignation and resignation rates.

3.2 Students

The College will monitor all students and potential students in order to inform the setting of targets and the measurement of progress in achieving them. For example, in:

- Applications, success and failure rates for admission to programmes
- Attendance and retention rates
- Achievement rates
- Work placements including success rates, satisfaction levels and job offers
- Learning support and progression
- Disciplinary action
- Complaints by students or their sponsors
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Student destinations

4. MEETING OUR DUTIES

- The College will seek to ensure, through its core values, that the College meets its general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2010. This will be achieved by ensuring that:
- Governors, staff, students and their sponsors (including work placement providers) are aware of our Equality Policy and the action needed for its implementation
- Staff, students and their sponsors are aware of the value placed upon equality and that action will be taken in the event of any breach of the policy.
- Governors and staff have access to comprehensive information, which assists them to plan, implement and monitor actions to carry out the responsibilities under the policy.
- The College will also ensure that publicity materials present appropriate and positive messages about equality and diversity.

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5. Appendix 1

The following sections of the policy support its overall aims and consider particular aspects of equality and diversity

5a. GENDER

Position Statement

The College will:

Work actively to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all that enables full participation and success in learning and employment and will open up opportunities by actively combating discrimination in every area of College life. The College will not allow sexual harassment or unfavourable treatment in any form

- Recognise that people are often treated unfairly in terms of education, training and employment because of their gender. The College aims to eradicate gender discrimination and to actively promote gender equality
- Recognise the importance of listening and responding to the needs of every individual involved in College life. We understand the potential damage that may be caused by gender discrimination and will take positive action to break this cycle

Policy Statements

The College will:

- Oppose sexism and be committed to taking positive action to identify and remove sexism from College life
- Be proactive in the development of equality of opportunity for all throughout their College career
- Monitor and review the participation and performance of male and female students and redress inequalities
- Positively encourage learners into non-traditional areas of study and work to minimise gender stereotyping
- Not tolerate sexual harassment in any area of College life. Any incidences of sexual harassment will be vigorously challenged through College disciplinary procedures
- Not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of gender re-assignment towards either trans- gendered or transsexual people
- Ensure that policies, procedures and opportunities for professional development will be family-friendly to encourage full participation.

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5b. SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Position Statement

The College:

- Is working actively to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all which is conducive to excellent practice in education, training and employment. The College actively combats discrimination, sexual harassment or unfavourable treatment in every area of College life
- Recognises that people are often treated unfairly in terms of education, training and employment because of their sexuality. The College's aim is to eradicate discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and to promote equality of opportunity for all.

Policy Statement

The College will:

- Strongly oppose discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and are committed to taking positive action to identify and remove homophobia from College life
- Encourage positive acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, gender re-assignment and heterosexual people
- Not tolerate homophobic harassment in any area of College life. College commitments will be made explicit to new learners and staff. Sexual harassment and discrimination will be challenged through College disciplinary procedures
- Employment policies and procedures will be family-friendly and will apply equally to households based on same-sex partnerships and to non-traditional parenting and care arrangements where appropriate legislation is in place

5c. DISABILITY

Position Statements

The College:

- Aims to identify and eliminate attitudes, practices and procedures that discriminate against people on the grounds of disability and/or learning difficulty such as dyslexia, autism
- Is committed to ensuring an inclusive, professional and friendly environment for students, employees and members of the public with disabilities and/or learning difficulties such as dyslexia and autism.

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Policy Statements

The College fully accepts its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4 (and the subsequent Equality Act 2010) and is committed to making any reasonable adjustments within the Corporation's business activities that will promote equal access and opportunity for students, employees and members of the public with disabilities and/or learning difficulties using College facilities.

The College will ensure that all disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties have access to:

- Appropriate opportunities to disclose disability and/or learning difficulty throughout their time as a learner at the College
- Flexible and inclusive learning opportunities e.g. additional learning support
- Assessment of need to ensure that any reasonable adjustments to College provision are made and are appropriate to the individual
- Direct and indirect, student centred learning support to enable access to College provision including specialist equipment and technology
- All other aspects of College provision
- Information in relevant formats to ensure equal access
- Information on support available including a Disability statement to learners
- Disability equality sub group will promote and monitor disability issues at College.

The College is committed to:

- Ensuring that its services and facilities are open to the public
- Equal and dignified treatment in the provision of those services and facilities
- Continual improvement in all aspects of equal access in all areas of College provision
- Maintaining strong links with external agencies to ensure the provision of appropriate and effective support for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties such as dyslexia, autism
- Undertaking health and safety risk assessments to assess entry onto programmes where appropriate
- Ensuring the College maintains the British Dyslexia Award for the quality of its provision for learners with dyslexia

5d. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE OR BELIEF

Position Statement

The College recognises the need to ensure compliance with the Equality Act under which it is unlawful to discriminate against workers because of religion or similar belief. For the purposes of treating all students and employees equally on religious grounds, the College defines religion or belief as being any named religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief. It will therefore be for the Employment Tribunals and other Courts to decide whether particular circumstances are covered by the regulations.

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Policy Statement

The College will:

- Not discriminate directly against anyone. That is, to treat them less favourably than others because of their religion or belief
- Not discriminate indirectly against anyone. That is to apply a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular religion or belief unless it can be objectively justified
- Not subject anyone to harassment. Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment having regard to all the circumstances and the perception of the victim.
- Not victimise anyone because they have made, or intend to make, a complaint or allegation, or have given, or intend to give, evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief
- Not discriminate or harass anyone in certain circumstances after the working relationship has ended
- Multi-faith chaplaincy will promote understanding of the diverse range of religious belief at College amongst staff and students

5e. RACE AND ETHNICITY

Position Statement

The College:

- is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good race relations between persons of different groups and avoiding racial discrimination, whether direct or indirect
- This policy is guided by the following legislation:
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
 - Employment Rights Act 1996

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Policy Statements

The College actively supports and welcomes diversity amongst its students, staff and visitors, recognising the particular contributions to the achievement of its mission that can be made by individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.

The College is committed to:

- Actively tackling racial discrimination, and promoting racial equality and good race relations.
- Encouraging, supporting and helping all students and staff to reach their potential.
- Working with other institutions, local communities and others to tackle racial discrimination and to encourage and promote good practice in achieving race equality.
- Assessing the effects of the policy on staff and students from different racial groups.
- Monitoring, by racial group, the admission and progress of students, and the recruitment and career development of staff.

5f. AGE

Position Statement

The College:

- Recognises that people are often discriminated against and stereotyped because of their age. This is evident in the range of beliefs, assumptions and attitudes which underpin judgements about an individual's potential, behaviour and preferences.
- Believes that prejudice and discrimination on the grounds of age ('ageism') have no place in an educational establishment. There should be no discrimination in employment on the grounds of age, subject to normal arrangements for employees to retire. The College will not discriminate against students on the grounds of age, except where age is a mandatory criterion for entry to a course.
- Recognises the value of Life Long Learning and that an individual's life experiences add to their role as a member of the College community and their personal learning experience.

Policy Statements

The College will:

- Promote and actively support educational achievement for people of all ages.
- Work to remove arbitrary age barriers to educational access and to the realisation of individual potential and success.
- Provide learning experiences which meet the needs of particular cohorts.
- Promote actively up-skilling and re-training programmes for those in paid employment or who wish to re-enter training.
- Develop teaching and learning and support strategies to meet the particular needs of learners from different age groups.
- Promote positive images of achievement by people of all ages and which recognise and celebrate the knowledge and experience which people bring their learning throughout life.

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- Welcome job applications from all age groups and select on the basis of specified skills and abilities including ability to speak and communicate in different languages spoken by the students and the communities we serve

5g. GENDER REASSIGNMENT

The definition has changed so that people no longer have to be under medical supervision to be protected by the law. Gender reassignment continues to cover those who intend to live permanently in a gender other than the one assigned at birth. References to transsexual people under the act covers employees who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex, i.e. gender reassignment.

5h. MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

Under the 'Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act, 2013 the marriage of same sex couples is lawful and must be treated the same as married heterosexual couples. The Equality Act 2010 does not define marriage as a protected characteristic in the context of education, however, marriage is a protected characteristic in employment practices.

5i. PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

- It protects a woman from discrimination because of her current or a previous pregnancy.
- It also protects her from maternity discrimination, which includes treating her unfavourably because she is breast-feeding, for 26 weeks after giving birth and provides that pregnancy or maternity discrimination as defined cannot be treated as sex discrimination.
- This policy will also protect staff from discrimination who are going through menopause
- The College will actively support any person that suffers loss of child (miscarriage or still birth.)

References

- Equality Act 2010:
[UK Government] (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>)
- Human Rights Act 1998:
[UK Government] (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>)
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001:
[UK Government] (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/10/contents>)
- Employment Rights Act 1996:
[UK Government] (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/18/contents>)

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