

Stockton Sixth Form College

Supporting Student Success

Disability Equality Scheme

Introduction

This *Disability Equality Scheme* sets out the framework within which the College intends to promote equality for and prevent discrimination against, our disabled students, staff and visitors.

The College undertakes as a minimum to recognise as disabled all who fall within the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act i.e. a person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.' The 2005 Act extends the positive duty on employers to promote equality and good relations between members of different groups to cover disability as well as race.

College Culture

The College aims to create a culture which celebrates and values diversity, where difference is respected and staff and students feel safe to disclose a disability. As part of this culture all staff should play their part in challenging and preventing stereotyping, prejudice and disability discrimination.

Legal context

In accordance with our legal duty the College in carrying out its functions, agrees to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate disability-related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take account of people's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others.

How DES fits in with other important documents such as Equality and diversity policy, SAR's and development plans

The approach to disability accords with the College Equal Opportunities Policy which states that 'everyone working or studying at the College should be valued equally, regardless of class, race, religion, colour, disability, sexual orientation, age or gender.' The commitment to equality of opportunity is embedded in department Self Assessment.

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Disability equality vision, values and principles

The College aims, expressed through its mission statement, to 'extend educational opportunity in a challenging and responsive environment.' The general aims and values of College stress those aspects of College culture and practices which enable students to fulfil their potential. These aims must be understood and pursued within a context that values diversity and appreciates the additional needs of those with disabilities.

Attitude towards disability equality

The College accepts the social model of disability which shifts the focus from what is 'wrong' with the disabled person to what is 'wrong' with attitudes, systems and practices, as it is these that often create disabling barriers and prevent participation by disabled people. The social model promotes the right of the disabled person to belong, to be valued, to determine choice and make decisions. The emphasis is taken away from the disabled person and is placed firmly on the shoulders of the College.

In valuing diversity the College recognises that disabled staff and students will bring positive benefits to the College. All will benefit from a culture which values individual differences, treats all with respect and dignity and provides a supportive working environment. Disabled staff and students provide role models for others, all members of society are at risk of becoming disabled at some point in their lives.

The College is committed to work to eliminate prejudice and discrimination in employment and recruitment practices, as well as to encourage changes in individual behaviour and attitudes, and ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for disabled people and non-disabled people. We recognise the social and intellectual benefits of a diverse student population.

Principles, Aims and Objectives of our Disability Equality Scheme

Principles

The commitment to delivering our Disability Equality Scheme is embodied in the following principles:

- Discrimination and harassment, direct or indirect, based on a person's disability is unjust. It is the right of all individuals to expect fair treatment.
- The social model of disability will be promoted across the College.

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- All students are entitled to an inclusive learning environment and the provision of an accessible curriculum.
- The commitment and involvement of staff and students is essential to the implementation of our Disability Equality Scheme.

Objectives

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

- to ensure that the College's commitment to disabled students and staff is embedded in its strategies and policies
- to carry out systematic evaluation of the progress towards providing for the needs of disabled students and staff as an integral part of the College's planning and review cycle.

Pre-enrolment

- to ensure that the College's procedures for pre-enrolment, and enrolment are fully accessible to disabled students
- to make specialist information, advice and guidance available to disabled applicants.
- closely monitor applications from disabled students. Follow up those who do not subsequently take a place and ensure that we have removed any possible barriers
- to record information disclosed about a student's needs on the College MIS Systems and to consider the implications of this information for the student's experience at College

Teaching and learning

- to maximise the opportunities for disabled students to achieve the same learning outcomes as non-disabled students
- to design all teaching and learning materials to be accessible to disabled students wherever possible
- to provide appropriate examination and assessment arrangements for disabled students

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Student Support and guidance

- to provide clear and coherent tutorial support for disabled students
- to ensure accessibility for disabled students to the full range of Student Services
- monitor the transition to employment and higher education of our students with disabilities and provide additional support if necessary
- to ensure that the promotion of equal opportunities, including disability awareness is included in the taught tutorial programme

Staff recruitment, employment and development

- actively to promote the College as a disability aware employer
- ensure that disabled applicants receive full and fair treatment and are considered solely on their ability to do the job
- to ensure that all disabled applicants whose skills and experience meet the essential criteria of the job specification are interviewed.

Staff Employment, Policies and Procedures

- To ensure that the work environment and working practices do not constitute unnecessary barriers which may prevent disabled people participating fully in the life of the College.
- to retain staff who become disabled in their current role wherever possible or to find a suitable alternative role if available (and to provide re-training where reasonable).

Staff Development

- to provide staff development and resources to raise staff awareness of issues relating to disabilities
- to ensure that all staff teaching students with disabilities and associated requirements have access to relevant information and are supported in their work.

Accessible documentation

- To ensure that where practicable all College information is accessible to disabled staff, students and the wider community.

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Accessible site

- to ensure that where practicable all new and existing College buildings are accessible and comply with DDA and other legislation

We hope through these measures to narrow identified gaps in experience between disabled and non-disabled.

Actively engaging with students

Students who have received additional support are encouraged to complete an evaluative survey and their comments are used to assist in the compilation of the College SAR.

Leadership and management

This DES has the support of Senior Management who seek to ensure that all aspects of College policy and activity are sensitive to disability issues and that procedures for recruitment, training and promotion of staff enshrine best practice in equal opportunities.

The Corporation will seek to ensure that the membership of the Corporation includes disabled people.

The Corporation are responsible for ensuring that:

- The College's strategic plan includes a commitment to disability equality
- Equalities training features as part of the College's strategic plan
- They are aware of the Corporation's statutory responsibilities in relation to disability legislation as an employer
- They receive and respond to disability monitoring information on staff and students

Senior Management are responsible for ensuring that:

- All aspects of College policy and activity are sensitive to disability issues
- Disability monitoring information is collected and analysed

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- Procedures for recruitment and promotion of staff enshrine best practice in equal opportunities
- The College's publicity materials present appropriate positive and non-stereotypical messages about disabled and non-disabled people
- Appropriate training and development is provided to support the appreciation and understanding of diversity.
- Senior management are responsible for taking the lead in challenging discriminatory behaviour on the part of managers, staff or students and creating an inclusive ethos

Staff are responsible for ensuring:

- They are aware of the College's statutory duties in relation to disability legislation
- Their schemes of work, lesson content and teaching resources demonstrate sensitivity to issues of diversity
- Teaching resources and handouts are written in an accessible format
- They challenge prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour, whether witting or unwitting, by students or other staff members wherever practicable
- They respond positively to the needs of disabled staff and students who they come in contact with in the course of their work.

We will ensure that the Action Plan monitors strategies to embed disability equality across the whole organisation. That disability equality is built into course reviews, self assessment and quality improvement processes.

Carrying out impact assessments

As part of the DES all relevant College policies, procedures, plans and practices are assessed for their impact on different groups of disabled and non-disabled staff and students.

The purpose is to ensure that our decisions and activities do not disadvantage disabled people, and also to identify opportunities to actively promote equality.

Future policies, procedures, plans and practices will be designed with the requirements of disabled people in mind from the start.

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All policies to be screened by SMT for potential impact on disabled staff and students. There already exists a timetable for reviewing all policies (some annually, some tri- annually). The policies will be discussed for approval or revision as appropriate. All policies are taken forward to the Corporation.

All new policies and procedures will include an impact assessment from the point of inception.

We will look at how policies and procedures work in practice to determine if any unwitting discrimination is taking place and to see how promoting positive attitudes might be built into policies, procedures, plans and practice.

Gathering Information

The monitoring process will be used to ensure that disabled staff and students are treated equally.

To inform the setting of targets and the measurement of progress in achieving them, the College currently collects and analyses the following information about disability:

All applicants for employment are invited to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form in which they can disclose a disability. The 2 ticks symbol on College headed paper guarantees that we will always interview disabled applicants. In addition we have completed an audit of current staff using legal categories of disability.

All student applicants are asked to disclose if they have a disability. Wherever possible, students who indicate that they have a disability are interviewed by the Assistant Principal (Student Services). All students at interview are asked to disclose any disability and their additional learning needs are discussed.

The data collected on disability conforms to the categories of disability contained in the Act. This facilitates detailed monitoring.

A list of all applicants is sent to SENCOs in partner schools and they are invited to provide any information relating to the additional learning needs of our applicants.

Students who have disclosed a disability are then interviewed at enrolment by Assistant Principal (Student Support) and details passed on to Learning Support who organise a support package, where necessary, and inform relevant staff.

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Putting the Scheme into practice

The scheme will be available on the College web-site.

Action plan reflects

- The priorities of disabled people
- The strategic priorities of the College
- Specific improved outcomes that we aim to achieve set against a realistic timetable
- Measurable indicators of progress towards outcomes
- Lines of accountability.

Monitoring and evaluation

To embed disability equality within planning processes, reviews of action plan and DES will form part of overall organisational strategic planning, quality assurance planning and review processes.

The appropriateness and effectiveness of the DES will be reviewed annually by the Policy, Standards and Governance Committee of the Corporation.

Staff Responsible	Last update	Review Date
VMH	March 2010	November 2011