



ABINGDON
HOUSE SCHOOL

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY INTERCULTURAL MATTERS POLICY

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Review Cycle: Biannual
Next Review Date: September 2025

Abingdon House School is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Abingdon House School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

The school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the [Education Act 1996](#), which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance [Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility](#) considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure regulatory compliance and the implementation of best practice:

- Peninsula BrightHR
- Peninsula BrightSafe (Health and Safety)
- Atlantic Data (DBS)
- Educare (online CPD)
- SchoolPro (data protection)
- Marsh Commercial (insurance)

Abingdon House School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Abingdon House School.

The policy documents of Abingdon House School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasions a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the re-publication of a set of policy documents. Care should therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

1 Introduction

Abingdon House School is a non-denominational school which inclusively welcomes students of all faiths and none. It is regarded as one of our special strengths that a diverse and varied community of staff and students works together in harmony and mutual respect. That mutual respect is founded on each staff member and student's primary respect for and acceptance of the cultural character of the school, and their willingness to live and work within the community in terms of that respect and acceptance.

At any one time, there are or may be students in school who come from a diverse range of backgrounds which may include: Christian (eg Anglican, other Protestant, Methodist or other non-conformist, Roman Catholic, Orthodox), Muslim (eg Sunni, Shia), Jewish (eg Orthodox, Conservative and Reform), Sikh (eg Amritdhari, Keshadhari, Sehajdhari), Hindu (eg Saivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism, Smartism), Shinto, agnostic or atheist traditions at home.

The school warmly seeks to accommodate students coming from different cultural backgrounds in a positive manner, effectively integrating them within the school community without undermining the nature, character and functioning of the school itself while respecting their cultural character. Families who place their children in Abingdon House School do so in the knowledge that the school has its own defined identity, and that each student is expected to participate appropriately in the life of the school.

The school is mindful of its obligation to provide a spiritual, moral, social and cultural education to the students. The PSHE / Religious Education programme directly addresses questions of differences between faiths, and seeks to help all students develop a sound understanding of non-faith and faiths other than their own faith or non-faith.

Staff training is provided from time to time within the school's INSET programme, to cultivate appropriate understanding of and responses to the diverse cultural character of the school community.

This inclusive policy is designed to avoid imposing a particular cultural or religious belief on a student, and to enable each to share properly and in an informed way in the communal identity of the school. It is hoped and expected that through such an experience, students are confirmed and strengthened within their cultural identity, and at the same time are confirmed and strengthened in a tolerant understanding of and cooperation with other faiths and with non-faith.

No student is excluded from choosing and being enabled to participate in any aspect of school life by reason of their cultural background.

In the unlikely event of a prospective student's cultural tradition potentially preventing them from participating fully adequately in the life of the school, the school will discuss with the prospective family the practical questions that may attend the placement, and together they will appropriately consider these matters.

The school is generally mindful of the implications for schools of the February 2007 ruling of Mr Justice Silber in the High Court in respect of: proportionality; security; the value of a

uniform policy in protecting young people in school from various pressures; communication; teacher-student relationships; and the ethos of equality.

The school implements this policy in line with the school's Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

2 Dietary requirements

The school Catering Department as a matter of course provides a range of non-vegetarian and vegetarian options daily.

Catering staff are trained to be aware of and sensitive to the fact that some students might not eat, for example, pork or beef, and to ensure that a suitable alternative is available.

Please also refer to the school's Food Policy.

3 Procedure: Health and Safety

Where Health and Safety requirements conflict with the intercultural acceptances set out in the present document, the Health and Safety requirements take precedence.

Culturally-determined adjustments to normal Health and Safety processes and written risk assessments may reasonably be made where appropriate on a case by case basis (eg the wearing of a turban by a practising Sikh as an alternative to a safety helmet when cycling or mountain biking).

4 Fasting

The school respects the principle of fasting, for example during Lent or Ramadan. The school equally has a responsibility to protect the physical well-being of each student.

If a student were to appear to be fasting to an extent that placed them at risk or that was causing them harm, staff are instructed to approach this matter by following the school's safeguarding and medical procedures.

It is noted that the Jewish and Christian scriptures do not direct fasting to the point where self-harm may occur, and that the Quran (supported by relevant hadith) similarly provides for young or vulnerable people to follow a modified or postponed fast.

The school does not enforce fasting upon a student on behalf of a parent.

5 Religious Observance

In accordance with the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006, as amended](#), the school treats a student's absence for religious observance as "authorised" if it is on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.

The Department for Education does not define which specific day or days schools should authorise for religious observance. Generally, it is taken to be a day when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their workplace in order to mark the occasion. The school seeks advice from the relevant religious body if there is doubt about the matter.

In line with national norms, the school authorises absence for religious observance no more than one day in any term for an individual occasion, and no more than three days in any academic year.

Where a student wishes to conduct their religious observance personally during the course of the school day on a regular basis (eg Friday prayers), they are asked to approach the Headteacher, who will make suitable arrangements so that adequate religious observances can be achieved without undue disruption to their access to education and to their participation in the life of the school. As necessary, the Headteacher seeks the advice and assistance of a relevant faith-community and/or a leader in such a community local to the school and liaises with the parent(s), in order most satisfactorily to achieve an appropriate outcome.

6 Uniform and Appearance

The school looks sympathetically and constructively at requests to adjust the school uniform for an individual in order to accommodate special religious and/or cultural needs.

For a practising sikh, the kara (bracelet) is permitted. The kirpan (dagger) is not permitted to be carried in school on Health and Safety grounds, except specifically by an Amritdhari sikh risk-assessed under school-specific Health and Safety requirements; in the event of any Health and Safety concern potentially or actually arising as a result of this, the permission may be withdrawn at the discretion of the School.

Please see the school's Uniform Policy.

7 Medical Issues

The school's medical policies, including the First Aid Policy, apply to all students regardless of cultural background.

The Medical Department, and staff generally, always seek to be sensitive to the individual particularities of each student, which is an essential part of delivering an appropriately holistic health care.

8 Language Needs

All students are assessed for their language (and other academic) needs before, at or shortly after arrival. The needs of students for whom English is an additional language are addressed in the school's English as an Additional Language Policy.

9 Gender separation

The school approaches questions of gender separation in accordance with the government guidance [Gender separation in mixed schools \(June 2018\)](#).

10 Review of implementation

The implementation of this Policy is reviewed annually by the school's Senior Leadership Team in consultation with staff and a report is made to the Governance Body.

The school may submit to Cavendish Education proposals for amendments to this Policy.