

## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Equality and diversity are at the heart of what we do and respect, equality of opportunity and fairness are central to the way in which The School operates.

Equality means ensuring that all individuals and groups are treated fairly and equally/ no less favourably, specific to their needs. In promoting equality, we must therefore remove discrimination.

Diversity is about recognising, respecting and valuing individual differences by promoting an inclusive culture. It is about recognising that people have different needs which are both visible and non-visible, and that these needs are not solely related to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act (2010), but also include the different experiences, backgrounds and approaches to work which people may have. The School recognises that if every student is to be encouraged to achieve their full potential then each person needs to be valued within the group.

The School is committed to ensuring that contributions from all staff and students are valued. The organisation achieves this by:

- creating an inclusive environment where all students are encouraged to develop to their full potential;
- endeavouring to make the training accessible to all interested parties by identifying and removing intellectual, cultural and attitudinal barriers which might otherwise prevent participation;
- acknowledging that financial considerations may sometimes be a barrier to participation and offering practical support via our bursary scheme;
- identifying physical and sensory barriers and making reasonable adjustments wherever possible in order to accommodate those with physical or sensory differences;
- striving to employ staff and recruit students who reflect the local and national context in which The School operates;
- supporting flexible working patterns, where possible and appropriate, in order to help staff achieve a reasonable balance of work and home responsibilities;
- ensuring that appropriate policies, procedures and practices are in place to meet the requirements of discrimination and equal opportunity legislation and that all staff are aware of their responsibility to assist in upholding these policies;
- ensuring effective processes are in place for resolving complaints of unfair treatment and discrimination.

The Equal Opportunities Policy below strives to ensure that no existing or potential employee or student of The School is discriminated against on the grounds set out in the Equality Act (2010).

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

The School aims to be fully aware of the historical, cultural and social experiences of many individuals and groups. We are committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our students and staff. Our objective is to create an environment in which there is no unlawful discrimination and all decisions are based solely on merit.

## 1. EQUALITY IN THE SCHOOL

The School aims to make its work fully accessible for as wide an audience as possible and to reflect the cultural diversity of the community within which it operates. We select both staff and students on the basis of their abilities and aim to ensure that no staff member or student (existing or potential) is discriminated against on the grounds of the criteria set out in the Equality Act (2010).

Discrimination is unlawful when it takes place on the grounds of one of the protected characteristics:-

- age
- disability
- gender re-assignment
- marriage or civil partnership status
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- gender
- sexual orientation

The School will not tolerate discrimination against any student or staff member by fellow students, staff members, or any persons appointed to the service of The School.

Discrimination can take a number of forms:

- **Direct discrimination** is when someone is treated less favourably than someone else just because of a protected characteristic;
- **Discrimination by perception or association** is when someone is treated less favourably than someone else because they associate with someone with a protected characteristic or because they are *perceived* to have a protected characteristic themselves;
- **Indirect discrimination** is when an apparently neutral practice or requirement disproportionately disadvantages one group or individual and cannot be justified by the requirements of the work;
- **Victimisation/harassment** may also be considered a form of discrimination; for example, when someone is treated in a way that is detrimental because they have made or intend to make a complaint or because they have acted as a witness to a complaint made by somebody else;
- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments** is discriminatory when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected to their disability or when the organisation fails to make reasonable adjustments to enable them to participate.

The School is committed to making adjustments to accommodate disabled staff members and students where possible and reasonable.

*It should be noted that, as this is a vocational training which prepares actors for the theatre, television and film industry, there may be instances where (as within the industry itself) a person's characteristics may be a factor in identifying suitable casting opportunities for them. Whilst, as part of the training, The School encourages unconventional casting choices, it may be that for the industry showcase, for example, an actor's characteristics may form the basis of some casting decisions, in the interests of showing all actors to their best advantage to the industry.*

## 2. RESPONSIBILITY & MONITORING

It is the duty of all staff members and students of The School to accept a personal responsibility for the practical application of the policy. The School also recognises that

specific responsibilities fall upon the management, supervisory staff and individuals involved in recruitment and administration.

Through monitoring, the current policy and practice will be regularly examined for effectiveness and changes made as necessary.

We may ask staff members, students on both full time and short courses and those auditioning for a place at The School for information about some of their protected characteristics, in order to help us to:

- establish whether our equality policy is effective in practice;
- take action where we think it is needed to address problems or reduce disparities.

We will treat this information anonymously wherever possible and we will use it only for monitoring purposes and not for any other purpose. We will always protect the confidentiality of the information given to us.

### **3. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

We aim to ensure that no student is placed at a disadvantage by practices or requirements which disproportionately disadvantage protected groups and which are not justified by the demands of the training.

Recruitment to the training shall be aimed at as wide a group as possible and each candidate will be considered on their merits and suitability for the training.

The School aims to encourage applications from and training opportunities for people from under-represented groups in the community. For some recruitment and promotion exercises we may take positive action to address under-representation in our student body by encouraging applications from people from certain under-represented groups - for example, we may on occasion target our advertising towards particular groups - however, we will ultimately make offers of a place on the training based on merit and not on the basis of protected characteristics.

All those involved in the recruitment and selection process will be made fully aware of The School's Equal Opportunities Policy. Recruitment procedures shall be regularly monitored and modified to ensure that individuals are selected solely on the basis of their merits and suitability for the training.

### **4. TRAINING FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The School will provide information to ensure all staff are aware of the Equal Opportunities Policy and to enable those who are involved in the recruitment and selection of students to be more effective in implementing this policy.

Training shall be provided to all staff to ensure their awareness and understanding of this Policy in relation to specific responsibilities of their work.

### **5. GRIEVANCES**

Any student or staff member who feels they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly is encouraged to raise their concerns with the management of The School. Students may wish to speak informally with a tutor or other staff member in the first instance. If a student or staff member wishes to make a formal complaint, they are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure.

Allegations of potential breaches of this policy will be treated seriously. Students or staff members who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or

treated less favourably as a result. However, false allegations of a breach of this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith may result in disciplinary action.

## **6. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Staff and students have the right not to experience unlawful discrimination whilst working or training at The School. They also have a responsibility to understand this policy and help us to implement it.

All staff and students have a duty not to discriminate against each other and not to help anyone else to do so.

If, after investigation, we decide that an employee or student has acted in breach of this policy, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

We will promote and publicise our Equal Opportunities Policy and will review it on a regular basis.