



Equal Opportunities Policy for students

Mission Statement

‘To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ’s Gospel’

Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Thornton College.

Thornton College is a Roman Catholic independent day and boarding school for girls aged 3 years to 19 years. We welcome applications from girls from many different denominations and faiths and we are a culturally diverse community. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our girls for today's world. We concentrate on educating the individual, to provide a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish.

Thornton College is a welcoming school where everyone is valued highly and where tolerance, honesty, co-operation and mutual respect for others are fostered. We are committed to equal treatment for all and the development of the whole person within a supportive, secure and creative environment. A broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum, giving due regard to the teaching of the Catholic Church, provides equal opportunity for all students to maximise their potential regardless of an individual's race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity. We endeavour to promote positive relationships with parents, governors and members of the wider community. As Christ is the foundation of our community, we follow his example of accepting all and treating each person with equal respect.

We also welcome applications from students with special needs and disabilities, as long as they can access the curriculum independently, and refer parents to our policy covering Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Accessibility.

At Thornton College we aim to promote equality and tackle any form of discrimination and actively promote harmonious relations in all areas of school life. We seek to remove any barriers to access, participation, progression, attainment and achievement. We take seriously our contribution towards community cohesion.

We are a non-selective school and we believe that the educational experience can only be enriched if children are exposed to as wide a range of cultural experiences as possible whilst they are developing.

This Policy will be reviewed annually or as required in response to statutory requirements.

Leadership, Governance & Management

Thornton College is committed to:

- being proactive in promoting good relationships and equality of opportunity across all aspects of school life and the wider community;

- encouraging, supporting and enabling all students and staff to reach their potential and make a positive contribution;
- working in partnership with families and the wider community to establish, promote and disseminate inclusive practice and tackle discrimination ensuring that our Equality and Diversity Policy is followed.
- The aims of this policy and the School's ethos as a whole is to:
 - Communicate the School's commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities for its students
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics
 - Promote equal treatment for all members of the School community
 - Create and maintain an open and supportive environment, free from discrimination
 - Foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the School
 - Comply with the School's equality duties contained in the Equality Act 2010
 - Remove or help to overcome barriers for students where they already exist
 - Enforce that all discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic is unacceptable and will not be tolerated
 - All members of the School community are expected to comply with this policy and treat others with dignity at all times.
- All parents are expected to support the aims of this policy and the School's ethos of tolerance and respect.
- Staff at the School, particularly those working at a management level, have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of the School with regard to equal opportunities.
- Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Thornton College ("the School").
- The School recognises the benefits of having a diverse School Community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Students will be taught to value and respect others. The School is committed to being an equal opportunities school and is committed to equal treatment for all students, regardless of race, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation. ("protected characteristics").

Regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared to meet the School's obligations under the:

- Equality Act 2010
- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2024 (revised July 2025)

Reviewed and Updated July 2025
To be reviewed July 2026

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This policy has regard to the following statutory guidance and advice:

- Equality Act 2010 explanatory notes
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical Guidance for Schools in England (2023) (updated July 2024)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:
 - Admissions Policy
 - Behaviour Policy
 - Anti-bullying Policy
 - Discipline and Exclusions Policy
 - Accessibility Plan
 - Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Policy
 - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
 - Complaints Policy

Admissions

The School treats every application for admission in a fair, open-minded and equal way in accordance with this policy and the School's Admissions Policy and in accordance with our status as a single sex school. We are a non-selective school and the School's aim is to encourage applications from prospective students with as diverse a range of background as possible. The School is committed to equal treatment for all and as such accepts applications from, and admits, all prospective students irrespective of their disability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief), social background or special educational needs ("SEN").

The School does not unlawfully discriminate in any way regarding entry. The School welcomes students with disabilities and/or special education needs, provided we can offer them any support that they require, cater for any additional needs and that our site can accommodate them. Parents must inform the School when submitting the Registration Form of any disabilities and/or special education needs which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and/or ability to fully participate in the education provided by the School so that we can consider what reasonable adjustments may be necessary to ensure that the child is not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other children. The School will not offer a place to a child with disabilities if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the School feels that they cannot adequately cater or meet their needs, that the prospective student is not going to be able to meaningfully access the education offered, or that their health and safety, or those of other students or staff, may be put at risk.

Educational services

The School affords all students access to educational provision including all benefits, services, and facilities, irrespective of any protected characteristic (subject to our single sex status, reasonable adjustments duty and considerations of safety and welfare). The School will not discriminate against a student on the grounds of any protected characteristic by excluding them or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The School will:

- Treat all members of the School community with respect and dignity and seek to provide a positive learning environment free from discrimination
- Endeavour to meet the needs of all students and ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics
- Ensure that students with English as an additional language and students with an Education Health Care Plan receive necessary educational and welfare support
- Monitor the admission and progress of students from different backgrounds
- Challenge inappropriate and unacceptable discriminatory behaviour by students and staff
- Encourage students to work and play freely and have respect for all other students irrespective of any protected characteristic
- Offer all students access to all areas of the curriculum and a full range of extra-curricular activities
- Work with parents and external agencies where appropriate to combat and prevent discrimination in School
- Ensure that it reviews, monitors, and evaluates the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices
- Use the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE to:
 - o Promote tolerance of and respect for each other, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
 - o Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
 - o Encourage students to question and challenge assumptions and stereotypes in order to better understand discriminatory behaviours and bias.

The School recognises that discrimination may be direct, indirect, or arising from disability whether or not it was intentional. Harassment and bullying in all its forms (including cyberbullying) is unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies. The School's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies make clear the seriousness of bullying, victimisation and harassment and that appropriate sanctions will be applied to any student who displays inappropriate behaviour.

Religious belief

[● Although the School's religious ethos is based on Catholic values and tradition, the School is inclusive and welcomes and respects the rights and freedoms of individuals from other religions and faiths (or with no religion or faith) subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the rights and freedoms of other members of the School community. All members of the

School community know and adhere to the school ethos which promotes respect, understanding and tolerance.

The governing body, through the senior leadership team, actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Requests for variation in the school uniform

All students are required to wear a uniform until Sixth Form. A "business dress" code operates for Years 12 and 13. Students will be given the choice of approved items of uniform (including sports kit). The Head will consider requests from parents and students for variations to the uniform for reasons related to disability provided they are consistent with the School's policy on health and safety and that such request/s are reasonable in all the circumstances including in light of the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn to School, parents are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Head, in advance.

Reasonable adjustments for students with disability

The School is committed to treating all students fairly and in light of the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the School will seek to ensure that students are not put at a substantial disadvantage, by comparison with students who are not disabled. As such, the School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability which includes:

1. making reasonable adjustments to our policies, criteria and practices (i.e. the way the School does things); and
2. providing auxiliary aids and services (i.e. provision of additional support or assistance).

Where the School is required to consider its reasonable adjustments duty, it will consult with parents and, where appropriate, the student, [the Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator "SENDSCO" / Head of Learning Support], and (with the parents' consent) any appropriate third party, which may include for example, a medical practitioner or educational psychologist. The School will discuss what reasonable adjustments, if any, the School is able to make to avoid their child being put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other students. The School will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a student's disability and the resources available to the School. Further information on the School's reasonable adjustments duty can be found in the School's SEN and Disability Policy.]

The School is not required to remove or alter physical features to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students or prospective students. Similarly, the School is not required to provide auxiliary aids for personal purposes unconnected with its provision of education and services.

The School has an Accessibility Plan in place which can be found on the School website and a hard copy can be made available upon request. This sets out the School's plan to increase the extent to which disabled students can participate in the School's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the School for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled

students are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School; and improve the delivery of information to disabled students which is readily accessible to students who are not disabled.

Monitoring and review

The Deputy Head regularly monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy and reports to the governors on the policy's effectiveness in practice.

Breaches of this policy

Students who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy.

If you believe that a student has received less favourable treatment as a result of a protected characteristic, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to a student's detriment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the School's complaints procedure available on the School's website.