

Provision for pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs policy

1 June 2017 Version Number:1

Review Date: Summer Term 2019

Northern
House
School



PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS, DIETARY, LANGUAGE OR CULTURAL NEEDS POLICY.

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students with specific religious, dietary, cultural and language needs are supported in line with the Equality Act 2010. It is not a standalone document and as such should be read alongside the Equality and Diversity Policy.

The tolerance of different faiths and beliefs; and mutual respect is taught as part of the Promoting British Values element of the PSHE programme. Please refer to the Code of Conduct policy which provides information as to the Northern House expectation of tolerance and mutual respect.

As speaking English as an additional language could be an indicator of vulnerability, this policy should also be read alongside the Child Protection Policy.

The aims of this policy are to:-

- To encourage good practice in regard to religious, dietary, cultural and language diversity.
- To promote harmony and understanding amongst students of different cultural and religious backgrounds.
- To enable the college to provide practical and sensitive support to students in regard to religious observance, cultural norms, dietary requirements and language assistance where English is not a student's first language.

Religion

The college embraces and celebrates all religions and denominations and makes practical provision for students to observe their religion during the course of their stay. Students are allowed to engage in voluntary individual prayer as long as this does not compromise the Northern House, Wokingham's educational aims and their own and other pupils' learning and development. Quiet rooms for pupils to pray can be made available where space allows. Where space is not on site students will be permitted reasonable time to facilitate this activity as long as this does not compromise their curriculum obligations.

Cultural diversity

Northern House School, Wokingham is proud of the wide cultural diversity of its students and takes steps to ensure that cultural differences are respected. It recognises the norms and customs associated with particular cultures and will ensure that students can observe and retain them wherever practicable during their time at school. The school, through assemblies and evening activities for residential pupils, on occasion will host various cultural events to raise awareness and understanding of cultural diversity.

The catering staff will also work with students to adjust the canteen arrangements to take into account any specific provision, if required, during Ramadan or any other religious festival.

Food

Northern House prides itself on the quality of its catering and the choice of food offered to pupils, staff, visitors and parents. Northern House School, Wokingham is able to provide food that satisfies particular religious and cultural needs such as vegetarian diets, Halal (Islam) and Kosher (Judaism) foods. In addition, the school is able to provide a choice of gluten-free bread and pasta. These foods are labelled to enable students and staff to identify food that is unacceptable to them for religious, cultural or food intolerance reasons.

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Students with specific dietary needs

Northern House School caters for pupils with specific dietary needs. Once a specific need has been declared or identified, the school will arrange for the individual concerned (or an approved representative) to meet members of Caterlink to discuss their dietary needs and make appropriate arrangements.

The school is very much aware of the dangers of food allergies. Please refer to the Care of Boarders and Administration of Medicines Policy for further information as to the support available for students who may have anaphylaxis as a result of food intolerance.

Language Support

Northern House School, Wokingham expects English to be spoken in communal areas, the classroom and the boarding facility. Wherever possible and if appropriate the school will make every effort to provide translators for visiting parents when attending meetings. Where necessary the school will provide additional English support as part of the regular curriculum.

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Northern House School Equality and Diversity Policy

To respect and embrace the diversity of our community at Northern House School underpins all aspects of our work with our pupils. This policy is part of our policy and procedure as to how Northern House School provides for pupils with particular religious, dietary, language and cultural needs. Northern House School, Wokingham works hard to recognise each young person's individual needs and works within the legislation and guidelines set out in [The Equality Act 2010](#).

It is important as childcare professionals that every member of staff is aware of their own beliefs, opinions, values and the personal assumptions they make in their work. Members of staff have the right and a duty to appropriately challenge their colleagues and other children and young people if they make racist or discriminatory comments or if they act in a disrespectful manner towards anyone. It is important to address individual understanding in a sensitive manner with the aim of improving the individual's level of awareness. Staff have the right to not experience any discrimination in the workplace due to their age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation or transgender status and this is legislated within The Equality Act 2010 (please see [Equality and Diversity in Employment](#) for further information)

Pupils who attend Northern House School have the right to attend school and not be discriminated against by either their peers or by staff/the school itself. Staff at Northern House School, Wokingham ensure we treat each young person as an individual and therefore try to accommodate all of their needs. We aim to provide the best possible education for all our pupils regardless of gender, colour, race, religion, nationality, language, home circumstances, ability, sexuality, transgender status, maternity needs or social background.

SAFEGUARDING AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Equality and Diversity ensures that individuals are not unfairly discriminated against but it should not be used as an acceptable explanation for child abuse or neglect and is not acceptable grounds for inaction when there are concerns that a child is or may be suffering or likely to suffer harm. Professionals should be aware of, and work with, the strengths and support systems available within families, ethnic groups and communities, which can be built on to help safeguard children and promote their welfare.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: RACE AND CULTURAL / LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Staff must ensure that they are sensitive to differing family patterns and lifestyles that vary across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups to ensure that the particular care needs of young people from these groups are met.

Staff should also be aware of the broader social factors that serve to discriminate against black and minority ethnic people. Working in a multi-racial and multicultural society requires professionals and organisations to be committed to equality in meeting the needs of all children and families and to understand the effects of racial harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism, as well as cultural misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

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Professionals should guard against myths and stereotypes - both positive and negative - of black and minority ethnic families. Anxiety about being accused of racist practice should not prevent the necessary action being taken to safeguard and promote a child's welfare. Careful assessment based on evidence of a child's needs, and family's strengths and difficulties, understood in the context of the wider social environment, will help to avoid any distorting effect of these influences on professional judgments. All children, whatever their race or cultural background, must receive the same care and safeguards with regard to abuse and neglect.

It is not expected or assumed within the school that the staff team would be aware or have an understanding of every need of every child or young person. Understanding, information and awareness are gained through talking and actively listening to young people and their family. If you are not aware of a young person's cultural needs, family culture or ethnic identity then you should ask that pupils tell you about their lifestyle and beliefs. Then respect that pupil by listening and checking out their meanings in order to ensure you understand correctly what they are telling you.

Staff members should however, be aware that not all cultural needs, beliefs and values are visible or easily recognisable. Good childcare with any child or young person means striving to get to know them as individuals. In line with the School's philosophy, all staff and young people should be encouraged to understand and embrace diversity; this includes cultural and religious expression.

It should be remembered that black children and children from other ethnic groups do experience racism in their life and this in itself needs to be understood from their own perspective.

Geographical Area

Northern House School is situated in Wokingham, Berkshire and the population is predominantly white. This needs to be taken into consideration when children and young people are within the community with staff members or unsupervised, as they may experience racism or racial attacks. Staff should support all pupils who have experienced any racial abuse and if felt necessary the police should be involved.

Language

Staff should be aware that where English is not the first language for a young person and their families they may require additional support. Pupils may also have regional accents and/or be used to certain regional dialects which can make it hard for them to understand other dialects/accents. In both cases staff should ensure that pupils receive support and they should not be discriminated against because of their linguistic background. Staff should make appropriate allowances to support pupils in making themselves understood and understanding those around them.

All staff should ensure that they are equally conversant with the names of all pupils as research shows that teachers and residential project workers tend to mispronounce or forget the names of Black or Asian young people. Should it be necessary, material may be translated into the first language and/or a translator provided. Staff should liaise with the pupil's local education authority in providing these services.

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All staff and young people should be aware, or made aware, that any language used either consciously or unconsciously may be offensive to others.

Diet

As previously suggested in the policy, it is important to get to know the pupils we are working with, this includes getting to know their preferences and requirements regarding their diet. Some young people may not be used to the tastes of the food normally served at school and staff should take this into account, ensuring the young person's needs are met. Staff should encourage young people to introduce foods/meals from their cultures to their peers to help them all become more aware of different foods from different cultures.

Stereotyping

It is important that staff members do not presume that all children and young people from ethnic groups are the same; there are differences within those groupings. Staff should ensure they work with young people to see past stereotype and prejudice as well.

Basic Care

Children and young people from ethnic groups have individual needs, which need to be met. This may include needing special additional hair/skin care products which may be provided by the school if the young person and their family are unable to provide this. Hair may also need to be treated and styled to their needs, which should be provided for through training or a purchased service. This should also be raised as early as possible with the pupil/parent/carer to identify individual needs.

Cultural Beliefs

Some cultures may have beliefs that discriminate against others and staff should be aware of this and be prepared to discuss this with pupils and possibly their parents and carers. Pupils should be made aware that whilst they are entitled to their cultural beliefs and backgrounds it will not be acceptable to use these beliefs to bully or discriminate against others.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

All pupils will be encouraged to follow the religion of their choice and their parents/carers will also be consulted about this at the young person's admissions meeting or before. It is important for staff to take into account both the young person's and parents' wishes in regards to religious observances as there may be differences in what the young person would like to observe and what their parents/carers wish them to do. Staff should try to ensure that both sides meet an agreement regarding this and ensure it is recorded as part of the child's placement plan.

Staff should ensure they make themselves aware of any important religious dates for young people and make sure they are given the opportunity to observe the events and are not discriminated against because of this. This may involve adapting the timetable for the young person or parents/carers may wish to request leave for young people to attend local religious ceremonies/events.

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School Assemblies should incorporate the celebration of differing cultural and religious beliefs and young people should be encouraged to share their religious beliefs with other young people to promote understanding and acceptance.

Young people must be made aware that some religious beliefs may discriminate against others and whilst it is the young person's right to observe these beliefs they may not use them to bully or discriminate against others. Staff must ensure young people are given the appropriate information and educate them regarding equality and diversity in these areas. Staff may need to discuss this issue with parents and carers as well and should ensure they are prepared to do so in a calm and rational manner.

Diet

There may be certain foods that young people are not allowed to eat or that they are not used to. If there are certain foods that they require, these should be identified and purchased for them throughout their time at the school. This issue should be raised as early as possible with the pupil's parents/carers to identify individual differences and needs. Young people should not 'miss out' due to the dietary requirements of their religion and staff should liaise with Caterlink to ensure the young people's needs are catered for. Separate food preparation equipment may need to be obtained in order to meet dietary requirements i.e. knives, chopping boards etc.

Dress

Recognition should be given to a young person's religious and cultural needs in relation to their dress and allowances will be made if necessary.

Stereotyping

There are various stereotypes and prejudices associated with different religious beliefs and staff should ensure that they are not influenced by these. Staff should ensure they work with young people to see past stereotype and prejudice as well.

Gender Awareness

Young people from certain religious beliefs may not be able to spend time alone with other young people or staff of the opposite gender and this should be discussed early on in the young person's placement and adequate provision made regarding this in the staffing arrangements within the residential unit and school. Young people may also not be able to take part in certain activities with young people/staff of the opposite gender i.e. swimming and again this should be discussed with parents/carers at the beginning of a placement and alternative arrangements agreed upon. Pupils should not miss out on opportunities because of these arrangements and every effort will be made to support this however consideration should be taken in the admission process regarding the ability to meet a pupil's needs in line with Northern House admission criteria.

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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: GENDER

All young people should be treated equal regardless of gender. Young people should be offered the same opportunities and activities and these should not be stereotyped to gender e.g. football for boys and dancing for girls. Staff should be aware of their own preconceptions or prejudices from their own upbringing/background regarding gender and ensure that these do not affect how they work with young people.

Staffing and gender

Staffing should reflect the need to ensure that there is a gender balance of staff on duty at all times and we aim to ensure that a member of staff of the same sex is available to deal with pupils personal issues wherever possible.

Staff must have an understanding and awareness of the pupil's social history and to be aware of risk issues in relation to gender. This information is to be reflected in the Positive Handling Plan.

When young people visit a GP or attend a hospital, if at all possible they should be given some choice as to which staff accompany them and of the gender of the GP/medical practitioner they wish to see.

If it becomes necessary to physically intervene with a young person, consideration must be given to the gender balance of the staff managing this wherever possible and practical.

Education

Young people should be encouraged to access all opportunities offered in education and subjects should not be 'stereotyped' to gender. Young people should also be able to access all extra-curricular activities and these should not be closed to young people on the basis of gender.

Pupils should also be able to access information and education in appropriate settings for example young people may feel uncomfortable discussing certain parts of the sex education curriculum with young people of the opposite sex so this should be accounted for in planning these lessons.

Facilities

Young people have separate facilities for personal care in school to provide privacy and also to safeguard pupils. In the residential unit each pupil has their own bedroom again to provide privacy and to safeguard.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED, ACADEMIC/SPORTING ABILITY

Northern House School, is a residential and day specialist school. All young people who attend have a EHC plan however the different needs of young people vary enormously. Young people may have a specific diagnosis i.e. ADHD, ASD etc or may have a variety of complex needs that prevent them from accessing mainstream schooling. All young people are treated individually and therefore we ensure that their individual special educational needs are met within what we provide as a school and are addressed within their Individual Education Plans.

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Young people should not be discriminated against because of their special educational needs and pupils will be offered the same opportunities and choices in their education. Young people should not be discriminated against because of their academic or sporting ability either and again will be offered all the same opportunities and choices in both their education and in extra-curricular activities. Lessons are differentiated for young people according to their ability in order to ensure that their needs are met and that the young person feels they are able to achieve. It is important that realistic targets are set for young people so they are not 'set up' to fail and instead can feel a sense of accomplishment. Young people who come to Northern House School (Wokingham) have often felt they have 'failed' in previous educational establishments and therefore may need more encouragement to enable them to achieve academically.

A prospective pupil looking to join Northern House School will have their needs assessed initially by the Head Teacher and SENCO where it will be decided whether Northern House as a school can meet these needs appropriately and then will be reviewed and monitored regularly to ensure we are still meeting their needs. In addition, to this a young person's needs may change over the course of their time at school and Northern House may not be able to meet their additional needs. In situations like this a pupil will not be discriminated against because of this rather it may become necessary to identify a more appropriate service to meet their Special Educational Needs.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Young people should all be treated equally regardless of sexual orientation - heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual. Homophobia is not acceptable and will be addressed within Northern House disciplinary procedures.

Education

Young people will be provided with education about sexuality through PSHE and citizenship in school and the residential unit. PSHE will be provided by residential project workers through key working, as well as group work activities and general conversation. For further information on this please see Sex and Relationships Education Policy.

Support

If young people are confused about their sexuality staff should ensure that the young person can discuss this with someone they feel comfortable with, either a member of the staff team or provide them with opportunities to access external organisations/professionals. A list of these and their contact details can be found in the policy Pupils Access to Persons Independent of Northern House Staff Group.

Stereotyping

There are various stereotypes and prejudices associated with different sexualities and staff should ensure they are not influenced by these and their practice is the same with all young people. Staff should ensure they work with young people to help them see past stereotype and prejudice as well.

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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: GENDER REASSIGNMENT / IDENTITY

Gender identity describes what gender a person identifies as being, not necessarily the gender that they were born as.

Young people may experience confusion or doubt about their gender identity. They may have struggled with this since they were young however adolescence and puberty can increase the feelings of confusion due to the physical and emotional changes that occur during this time. Whilst some young people may resolve these issues on their own many will need support or guidance regarding this. Staff should ensure that young people can access resources to support them in this and that they are not discriminated against because of this. Good resources include the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) website www.gires.org.uk and www.mermaidsuk.org.uk.

Pupils should not have their feelings dismissed or minimised because of a lack of understanding on staff's part and staff should ensure they make themselves aware of the issues surrounding gender identity and reassignment. A good resource is the GIRES Transphobic Bullying toolkit - [Toolkit to prevent Transphobic Bullying](#) which gives detailed information regarding gender identity, reassignment and the support that should be given, however staff should ensure they follow Northern House policies and guidance regarding safeguarding and confidentiality rather than what is advised in this document regarding privacy.

If a young person decides with support from appropriate organisations and professionals that they want to go through the gender reassignment process then staff should ensure that they are supported in this whilst at school. Support required may differ with each young person and this should be discussed with the young person, their parents and carers (where appropriate) and other professionals to ensure that the young person is not discriminated against and that their wishes are listened to and wherever possible actioned.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: DIETARY NEEDS

Young people who attend Northern House School may have various different dietary needs. Needs regarding race, cultural background and/or religious belief are discussed above in the relevant sections. Young people may also have different dietary needs due to medical conditions and/or allergies. Staff should ensure they are aware of these needs before admission and that this information is shared with other staff as appropriate including the catering staff. Young people should not 'miss out' as result of their dietary needs and alternative appropriate provision should be made for them to ensure this.

Young people may have poor diets when they first come to Northern House due to various issues and it is staff's responsibility to try and educate them in healthy eating and nutrition. Staff may need to take medical advice regarding this and should work together with parents and carers to ensure that young people receive a healthy varied diet. Young people should not be discriminated against because of their poor eating habits however they should be educated and encouraged to develop appropriate and healthy eating habits.

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Young people may also struggle with mealtimes because of various issues either in their past or because of their own needs for example they may struggle to eat in noisy or crowded environments or struggle to eat foods of certain textures. This should be documented and appropriate measures put in place to support them.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER HERITAGE

The section on equality and diversity: Race/Cultural/Linguistic background applies to young people of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage however there are specific issues pertaining to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people. In April 2012 there was a ministerial working group report on 'tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers' as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities consistently have poorer outcomes in education, health and employment. All young people who attend Northern House should be treated equally and young people should not be discriminated against because of their cultural heritage.

Staff should be aware that GRT young people may have had significant breaks in their previous education due to moving around or being unable to access appropriate education where they were living. Staff should ensure that they differentiate appropriately but also make sure they are aware that GRT young people may be more anxious about being in a formal education setting and take steps to reduce this anxiety.

Within the GRT community there is less emphasis on young people attending school particularly at secondary level and staff will need to be aware of this and support the young people and their families to ensure consistent attendance. If there are any persistent issues regarding this staff should take advice from the young person's local authority as normal but can also look for advice on the [Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other travellers website](#).

Stereotyping

There has been a large amount of publicity and media interest in recent years about the GRT community in the UK. There has been some negative press and young people may experience discrimination as a result of this. Staff need to ensure that any discrimination is dealt with through the correct procedures. Staff should encourage young people from the GRT community to share their experiences to educate their peers. Staff should also refer to the school's bullying procedures if appropriate.

Gender awareness

The GRT community adhere to traditional values regarding males and females and girls are usually not allowed to spend time by themselves with boys outside of their immediate family until they are married. Staff should be aware of this particularly when young people are looking to go out on trips independently and should involve parents and carers in planning this

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: REFUGEES/ASYLUM SEEKERS

Children of asylum seekers are entitled to and required to receive full time education and this is the responsibility of the Local Education Authority to organise. Any young person who is referred to Northern House School as the child of an asylum seeker is entitled to the same experience as any other child and should not be discriminated against because of this. Children of asylum seekers may

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need time off to attend appointments/interviews etc pertaining to the asylum application and appropriate arrangements should be made to facilitate this. If the young person themselves are seeking asylum then they will be supported by either social care and/or family members and may need additional time to attend meetings relating to their asylum application.

Children and young people who have been granted refugee status have not necessarily been given permanent residency and staff should ensure they are aware of the young person's status. Most people granted refugee status are given leave to remain for five years and they will have to apply for permanent residency if they wish to stay in the UK permanently however people who are considered to have special needs may be granted longer leave to remain in order to complete their application and to receive the appropriate support. No young person should be discriminated against because of their refugee or residency status and are entitled to the same experience as any other child including the right to full time education.

More information on asylum and refugee status can be found on the UK Border Agency website [UKBA](#)

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: CHILDREN WITH PARENTS IN ARMED FORCES

Children who have a parent in the armed forces may experience different difficulties to other young people because of the expectations regarding armed forces personnel. The Department of Education and Ofsted have highlighted that these young people are at risk of lower achievement due to the various difficulties they may encounter and staff should ensure they are aware of any possible issues and work to ensure that the young person is not disadvantaged as a result. Staff and young people may have views on the armed forces and various conflicts they are involved in however these should not be used to discriminate against young people and staff should make sure that they remain professional in their approach.

For further information on good practice with young people with parents in the armed forces please see Department of Education good practice guide - [How schools secure the progress of children from the armed forces families](#)

Young people whose parent/s are in the armed forces are also protected by the Armed Forces Covenant which states that 'the armed forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services'. This covenant is recognised in law under the Armed Forces Act 2011. Funding is available for a pupil premium to support young people in education. Young people from armed forces families may also be eligible for the [Residential Support Scheme](#) when moving on from Northern House to college to enable them to receive financial support if their course is not in the local area of where their parent/s are posted.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: CHILDREN OF PRISONERS

All young people who attend Northern House School should be treated equally and young people should not be discriminated against because of the actions of their parents. Recent campaigns have highlighted the risk of poorer outcomes for children with a parent who is in prison/has been in prison.

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Staff should be aware that having a parent in prison can cause anxiety and upset for young people and should ensure that this is taken into consideration in the young person's Positive Handling Plan. Changes to a parent's sentence or the possibility of a parent coming out of prison can also cause anxiety for a young person and their family. It may be that the parent was in prison because of violence towards other family members and their release may make the young person anxious about the violence reoccurring. In other cases the young person may be anxious about how the family dynamic will change with a parent coming back home and this may cause them to behave differently. Staff should liaise with parents/carers and other professionals to ensure that they are aware of issues surrounding the parent in prison so they can make relevant staff members aware and plan appropriately for the young person so it does not adversely affect them.

Staff should also be aware that young people may share the reason their parent is in prison with their peers who may react badly depending on the conviction which may then lead to bullying or harassment. Bullying is not acceptable and should be dealt with through the schools' bullying policy - Countering Bullying.

For further advice for support for children of prisoners please see <http://www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk/>

Other useful resources

[Equality and Diversity in Employment Preventing Language Discrimination](#)
[Equality and human rights - advice for education providers](#)