Park Lodge School

Equal Opportunities Policy

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Introduction

School context

Park Lodge School is a highly specialist provision for young people admitted to Park Lodge Clinic, a Tier 4 CAMHS Eating Disorder Service. We are not a mainstream setting: our students present with complex needs that require education to be fully integrated into their clinical care and recovery. While most students have a primary diagnosis of an eating disorder or eating-related difficulty, many also experience co-occurring mental health conditions such as depression, OCD, or anxiety.

A significant feature of our student profile is disengagement from education prior to admission. Many have experienced long periods out of school, disrupted learning journeys, or strained relationships with education. Re-engagement is therefore central to our work. From admission, we build a detailed picture of each young person's educational history, health needs, and personal circumstances, enabling us to design personalised programmes that focus not only on academic progress but also on restoring confidence, rebuilding routines, and preparing students for their next steps.

Students are admitted and discharged throughout the year, with the average stay being 16–20 weeks, though some remain significantly longer depending on clinical needs. All placements are commissioned by home Local Authorities, who retain statutory responsibility for education. Close collaboration with families, home schools, and community teams ensures continuity of learning and a supported transition post-discharge.

The school operates within Park Lodge Hospital and is embedded in the work of the hospital's Multi-Disciplinary Team, including Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, and Nursing and Care staff. Education is not delivered in isolation but as a core part of recovery. Daily collaboration with clinical colleagues aligns learning with therapeutic progress so that barriers are understood holistically and education actively contributes to reintegration.

Our ethos is built on personalisation, flexibility, and partnership. We work at the intersection of health, education, and family life, ensuring every young person has the opportunity to re-engage with learning, develop resilience, and transition successfully back into their home, school, and wider community.

Ethos and Vision

At Park Lodge School, our ethos reflects the unique circumstances in which we work. We educate young people who are inpatients at Park Lodge Clinic, a Tier 4 CAMHS Eating Disorder Service. Education here is not an add-on: it is an essential strand of treatment and recovery. Everything we do is shaped by our commitment to each student's health, wellbeing, and future.

Our core values are expressed through the acronym HEALTH, which captures the spirit of our school:

- Hopeful Environment – We create a climate of optimism and possibility, helping young people to see beyond their immediate challenges and believe in their capacity to grow.
- Empathy and Understanding – We foster a community that listens, understands, and values every individual, ensuring students feel safe, seen, and supported.
- Achievement – We celebrate progress in all its forms. Academic success is important, but so too is confidence, resilience, and re-engagement with learning.
- Lifelong Learning – We model curiosity and growth, encouraging students and staff to continue developing their skills, knowledge, and aspirations.
- Therapeutic Support – Working hand-in-hand with the hospital's clinical team, we integrate therapeutic strategies into daily learning, ensuring education is part of the recovery journey.
- Holistic Wellness – We see the whole child: their health, their learning, their family, and their future. Our goal is to equip students for a successful return to education, home, and community life.

These values underpin our ethos and define our purpose. Park Lodge is a place where education and recovery go hand in hand, where barriers are met with creativity and compassion, and where every young person is given the chance to rediscover their voice, their talents, and their future.

Our vision is that every young person leaves Park Lodge having re-engaged with education, equipped with renewed confidence, resilience, and the skills to thrive in life beyond the hospital.

Statement of Intent

This policy outlines our commitment to promoting equality, fairness, and inclusion for all pupils and staff at Park Lodge Hospital School. It applies to every aspect of school life, including recruitment, employment, teaching and learning, access to services, and enrichment activities.

Equality at Park Lodge goes beyond legal compliance – it is about actively creating an environment that is inclusive, trauma-informed, supportive, and where difference is recognised, valued, and celebrated.

As a hospital school supporting pupils with complex social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs, we recognise that both pupils and staff may face unique challenges. This policy ensures everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, and that no individual is disadvantaged due to personal circumstances, background, or identity.

Legal Framework

This policy is guided by:

- The Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- The Independent School Standards, including safeguarding and welfare requirements.
- Our wider equality and inclusion policies, SEND policy, and complaints procedures.

It complements other relevant policies, including Behaviour, Accessibility, and Safeguarding, ensuring a cohesive approach to inclusion.

Principles of Equal Opportunity

Park Lodge Hospital School is committed to preventing:

- Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination: applying rules or procedures that disadvantage particular groups without a justifiable reason.
- Harassment: unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates dignity or creates a hostile environment.
- Victimisation: treating someone unfairly because they have made or supported a complaint.

We apply these principles across all aspects of school life, recognising that inclusion is central to educational, emotional, and social development in a hospital school setting.

Equal Opportunities for Staff

We aim to be a fair, inclusive, and supportive employer. This includes:

- Recruitment, selection, and promotion based on merit and fairness.
- Access to professional development and training, including SEMH, trauma-informed, and SEND-specific CPD.
- Working conditions, pay, and flexible working arrangements where appropriate.
- Maintaining a culture where concerns can be raised safely without fear of reprisal.

All staff are expected to model inclusive behaviour and uphold equality in interactions with pupils, colleagues, and families.

Equal Opportunities for Pupils

We recognise that many pupils face complex medical, mental health, or educational challenges. We are committed to:

- Ensuring equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum, personalised to meet individual needs.
- Supporting pupils to overcome barriers related to health, SEMH, or disrupted education.
- Reflecting diversity and inclusion in curriculum resources and teaching.
- Listening to pupils and involving them in decisions about their education and care, promoting agency and empowerment.

Strategies to Promote Equality

We take proactive steps to embed inclusion throughout our provision:

- Staff CPD: regular training in equality, diversity, trauma-informed approaches, and SEMH-specific strategies.
- Adapted teaching approaches: personalised learning plans, consideration of health and emotional needs, and flexible approaches for EHCPs or undiagnosed additional needs.
- Collaborative working: close coordination with families, clinical teams, and external agencies to provide a joined-up approach to education and care.
- School culture: actively challenge prejudice, stereotypes, and bias; model empathy, understanding, and respect in all interactions.

Equality Objectives

Priority Area	Objective	Rationale	Strategies	Monitoring & Evidence
Access to Personalised Learning	Ensure all new pupils have a personalised, inclusive education plan within 10 school days of admission, incorporating health needs, EHCP targets, and future goals; develop reintegration plan before discharge	Students often have disrupted education due to complex medical and SEMH needs; personalised plans stabilise learning and support recovery	Personalised curriculum planning on CroL; IEPs; SEND IPPs; Education Care Plans; documentation of SEND provision and adaptations	SLT review; CROL documentation; completion tracked by admission date; reintegration plan evidence
Engagement & Re-engagement with Learning	Improve sustained engagement by at least 15% for pupils disengaged due to mental health needs	Many pupils struggle to engage due to SEMH challenges; re-engagement is key to recovery and progression	Tailored IEPs; MHFE & PAGE tracking; Key Teacher programme; targeted pastoral and therapeutic interventions	Attendance data; MHFE/PAGE scores; RoLE logs; weekly SLT review; care/education meeting notes
Staff Development & Inclusive Practice	Ensure 100% of staff receive training in adaptive pedagogy, trauma-informed practice, and inclusive strategies within first term	Staff require confidence and skills to effectively support pupils with disrupted education and complex needs	CPDL planning and delivery; ongoing trauma-informed and SEND training; RoLE entries to evidence application	CPDL attendance; RoLE entries; staff feedback; CPDL impact reviews; supervision notes

Monitoring and Review

We monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- Pupil progress, engagement, and wellbeing.
- Staff recruitment, retention, and development opportunities.
- Feedback from pupils, staff, and families.
- Records of incidents of discrimination or bias.

The policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Headteacher: ensures policy implementation and promotion of equality across the school.
- All staff: model inclusive behaviour, challenge prejudice, and address discrimination.

- Advisory Board: provides oversight, ensuring the school meets its legal duties and best practice standards.

Complaints

Concerns about discrimination or unequal treatment should be raised following the school's complaints policy, which ensures complaints are addressed clearly, fairly, and supportively.