



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Policy owner: Top Hat Theatre School

Applies to: All students, staff, teachers, volunteers, applicants, parents/carers and visitors

Effective from: September 2026

Review date: September 2027

1. Our commitment

Top Hat Theatre School is committed to promoting equality, diversity and opportunity for everyone within our school community.

We want Top Hat to be a welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment where every child and young person has the opportunity to participate, develop their skills, build confidence and reach their full potential.

We value the diversity of our students, families and staff and recognise that every individual brings their own experiences, background, talents and perspectives to our school.

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.

All students, staff, volunteers and applicants will be treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

2. Equality and protected characteristics

Top Hat will not unlawfully discriminate against any individual because of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

These include:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race, including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

We will also seek to ensure that no individual is unfairly disadvantaged because of any other personal characteristic or circumstance.

3. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to:

- students and prospective students;
- parents and carers;
- employees and prospective employees;
- teachers and visiting teachers;
- volunteers;
- contractors and other individuals working with Top Hat;
- visitors to the school.

The principles of this policy apply to all areas of Top Hat's activities, including:

- enrolment and admissions;
 - classes and lessons;
 - casting and performance opportunities;
 - examinations;
 - festivals and competitions;
 - trips and visits;
 - rehearsals and productions;
 - auditions;
 - employment and recruitment;
 - training and professional development;
 - use of school facilities;
 - communication;
 - social activities and events.
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4. Equality of membership and opportunity

Top Hat aims to provide equality of opportunity to all students.

Decisions regarding enrolment, participation, casting, performances, examinations, trips, competitions and other opportunities will be made fairly and objectively, based on relevant criteria.

Where an activity has legitimate requirements relating to age, ability, experience, safeguarding, health and safety, licensing or the nature of a particular performance, these requirements will be considered appropriately and proportionately.

We recognise that treating everyone fairly does not always mean treating everyone identically.

Where reasonable and appropriate, Top Hat may make adjustments or provide additional support to enable an individual to participate fully.

5. Inclusion and accessibility

Top Hat recognises that students have different needs and circumstances.

We will make reasonable efforts to ensure that our classes, facilities, activities and opportunities are accessible and inclusive.

Where a student has a disability or additional need, we will work with the student and their parent/carer, where appropriate, to understand their needs and consider reasonable adjustments.

Any adjustments will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the needs of the student, the activity involved, safeguarding, health and safety, available resources and our ability to provide the appropriate support.

6. Respect, dignity and behaviour

Everyone at Top Hat has the right to be treated with respect and dignity.

We expect students, staff, parents/carers and visitors to:

- treat others respectfully;
- value differences between individuals;
- avoid discriminatory language or behaviour;
- avoid harassment, intimidation or victimisation;
- challenge inappropriate behaviour appropriately;
- contribute to a positive and inclusive environment.

Discriminatory, intimidating, abusive or harassing behaviour will not be tolerated.

This applies to behaviour taking place within Top Hat premises, during classes, rehearsals, performances, trips and events, and where appropriate to online communications connected with Top Hat.

7. Discrimination

Discrimination can take different forms.

Top Hat will take seriously concerns relating to:

Direct discrimination – treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination – applying a provision, criterion or practice which particularly disadvantages people sharing a protected characteristic, unless it can be objectively justified where the law allows.

Harassment – unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Victimisation – treating someone unfairly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a concern about discrimination.

Top Hat will consider concerns individually and will take appropriate action where discriminatory behaviour is identified.

8. Bullying and harassment

Equality and inclusion are closely connected with Top Hat's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Bullying, harassment, intimidation or exclusion based on a person's identity or protected characteristic will not be tolerated.

Concerns about bullying or harassment will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and Safeguarding procedures where appropriate.

9. Positive action

Top Hat recognises that some individuals or groups may experience disadvantage or barriers to participation.

Where lawful and appropriate, Top Hat may take positive action to encourage participation, remove barriers or provide additional support for individuals or groups who may be disadvantaged.

Positive action will not be used to unlawfully discriminate against another individual.

10. Recruitment and employment

Top Hat is committed to fair and objective recruitment and employment practices.

Employment decisions, including recruitment, selection, training, promotion and termination, will be based on relevant skills, qualifications, experience, suitability and other legitimate criteria.

Applicants and employees will not be unlawfully discriminated against because of a protected characteristic.

Top Hat will seek to provide an inclusive working environment in which staff are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

11. Responsibilities

The Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy.

The Principal will:

- promote equality and inclusion throughout Top Hat;
- ensure concerns are taken seriously;
- respond appropriately to allegations of discrimination;
- ensure relevant policies and procedures work together;
- review the effectiveness of this policy;
- take appropriate action where breaches occur.

Staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers are expected to:

- treat students and colleagues fairly and respectfully;
- promote an inclusive environment;
- challenge inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour appropriately;
- report concerns to the Principal;
- comply with this policy and associated policies.

Students

Students are expected to:

- treat others with respect;
- respect differences between people;
- avoid discriminatory or offensive behaviour;
- report concerns to a trusted member of staff;
- contribute to a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- communicate respectfully with students, staff and other families;
- support Top Hat's commitment to equality and inclusion;
- raise concerns appropriately and privately;
- avoid discriminatory, abusive or intimidating behaviour.

12. Breaches of this policy

Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously.

Depending on the circumstances, action may include:

- discussion and guidance;
- informal or formal warnings;
- additional support or monitoring;
- behaviour management measures;
- communication with parents/carers;
- disciplinary action in relation to staff;
- suspension or termination of a student's enrolment;
- termination of employment or volunteering arrangements;
- restriction of communication or access to Top Hat premises where appropriate;

- referral to relevant external agencies where necessary.

Any action will be proportionate to the circumstances and consistent with relevant Top Hat policies and procedures.

13. Complaints and raising concerns

Anyone who believes they have experienced discrimination, harassment or victimisation connected with Top Hat is encouraged to raise their concern with the Principal.

Concerns should, wherever possible, be raised promptly and with sufficient information to allow the matter to be considered appropriately.

Top Hat will:

- take concerns seriously;
- listen to those involved;
- investigate matters fairly and objectively where appropriate;
- maintain appropriate records;
- take proportionate action where necessary.

Where a concern involves safeguarding, it will be managed in accordance with Top Hat's Safeguarding Policy.

14. Confidentiality

Top Hat will respect the privacy of individuals involved in complaints and concerns.

Information will only be shared with those who need to know, where appropriate, or where there is a safeguarding, legal or other legitimate reason for doing so.

Top Hat will not normally disclose confidential information about another student or member of staff, including details of any action taken against them.

15. Protection from victimisation

No individual should be treated unfairly because they have:

- raised a genuine concern;
- made a complaint;
- supported another person's complaint;
- provided information during an investigation;
- otherwise acted appropriately in relation to an equality concern.

Any allegation of victimisation will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Knowingly making malicious or deliberately false allegations is not considered victimisation and may itself be addressed under the school's relevant policies.

16. Monitoring and review

Top Hat will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and will consider information available to the school which may identify barriers to equality or participation.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner where circumstances, legislation or guidance require it.

Where improvements are identified, appropriate action will be taken.

17. Related policies

This policy should be read alongside Top Hat Theatre School's:

- Anti-Bullying Policy;
 - Safeguarding Policy;
 - Behaviour Policy;
 - Complaints Policy;
 - Staff Code of Conduct;
 - Parent/Carer Code of Conduct;
 - Health & Safety Policy.
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18. Policy statement

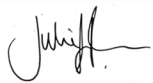
Top Hat Theatre School is committed to creating an environment where everyone feels welcome, respected and valued.

We believe that diversity strengthens our school community and that every student should be given the opportunity to develop their confidence, skills and talents.

DREAM. BELIEVE. ACHIEVE.

19. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if circumstances, safeguarding guidance or legislation require it.

Signed: 

Name/Role: Julie McKenna Company Director

Date: 15.9.2026

Next review: September 2027