Equal Opportunities Policy 2027

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PERFORMERS THEATRE COMPANY

INTRODUCTION AND COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

Performers Theatre Company is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, welcoming and respectful environment in which every individual is valued and supported to achieve their potential.

We believe that the performing arts should provide opportunities for individuals to develop confidence, creativity, skills and personal achievement, regardless of their background, identity or individual circumstances.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our organisational culture and our commitment to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to **Be Your Best**.

We recognise that individuals have different experiences, abilities, needs and circumstances. Providing equal opportunities does not always mean treating everyone identically. It means removing unnecessary barriers, responding appropriately to individual needs and ensuring that decisions are fair, transparent and proportionate.

Our organisational values - Enhance, Engage, Empower and Enthuse - underpin this commitment.

Performers Theatre Company will:

- Promote equality, diversity, inclusion and mutual respect.
- Oppose unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Provide fair access to classes, productions and opportunities.
- Consider and implement reasonable adjustments where required.
- Support individual learning, development and progression.
- Challenge discriminatory language and behaviour.
- Maintain fair recruitment, audition and casting practices.
- Encourage individuals to raise concerns without fear of retaliation.
- Respond appropriately to complaints and safeguarding concerns.
- Review organisational practices to identify and reduce barriers to participation.

Every individual deserves to feel respected, included and able to participate with dignity.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes Performers Theatre Company's approach to equality, diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities.

Its purpose is to:

- Set clear expectations for respectful and inclusive behaviour.
- Explain the organisation's equality commitments and relevant legal responsibilities.
- Promote fair access to education, training and performance opportunities.
- Establish arrangements for reasonable adjustments and accessibility.
- Support fair recruitment and employment practices.
- Promote fairness in auditions and casting.
- Provide procedures for reporting and responding to concerns.
- Ensure appropriate accountability, recording and monitoring.

This policy applies to:

- Children and young people attending Performers activities.
- Adult students and performers.
- Parents and carers.
- The Principal and Leadership Team.
- Employees and freelance practitioners.
- Volunteers, assistants and work experience students.
- Visiting professionals and workshop leaders.
- Chaperones and production personnel.
- Applicants for employment, engagement, classes, productions and other opportunities.

- Visitors and other individuals interacting with the organisation.

It applies across weekly classes, rehearsals, auditions, productions, performances, workshops, holiday programmes, off-site activities, recruitment processes and associated communications.

Different legal responsibilities may apply depending on the individual's relationship with the organisation, the activity concerned and the circumstances.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The principal legislation underpinning this policy is the **Equality Act 2010**.

The Act provides protection against unlawful discrimination in specified circumstances, including employment and the provision of services.

The nine protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act 2010 are:

1. Age.
2. Disability.
3. Gender reassignment.
4. Marriage and civil partnership.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.
6. Race.
7. Religion or belief.
8. Sex.
9. Sexual orientation.

The scope of protection and applicable exceptions vary according to the legal context. Not every protected characteristic operates in precisely the same way in every setting.

Performers Theatre Company also recognises the importance of treating individuals fairly regardless of other personal circumstances, including:

- Socioeconomic background.
- Family structure or caring responsibilities.
- Gender identity or expression.
- Educational background.
- Appearance or body image.
- Additional learning or communication needs.
- Other circumstances that may create barriers to participation.

These wider commitments reflect the organisation's values and do not imply that every characteristic listed has identical statutory protection under the Equality Act.

The organisation will comply with applicable equality legislation and seek appropriate professional advice where legal obligations or exceptions are unclear.

UNDERSTANDING DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND VICTIMISATION

Performers Theatre Company recognises that unfair treatment can occur in different forms.

Direct Discrimination
Direct discrimination may occur where an individual is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic, in circumstances covered by the Equality Act.

Indirect Discrimination
Indirect discrimination may occur where a provision, criterion or practice applies generally but places individuals sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage and cannot be objectively justified where the law permits justification.

Harassment
Harassment may involve unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

The statutory definition and available protections depend on the circumstances.

Victimisation
Victimisation may occur where an individual is subjected to a detriment because they have undertaken, or are believed to have undertaken, a protected act under equality legislation.

This may include raising certain discrimination complaints or supporting another person's complaint.

Disability-Related Discrimination
The Equality Act includes additional protections relating to disability, including discrimination arising from disability and the duty to make reasonable adjustments, where applicable.

Bullying and Other Unacceptable Conduct
Not every instance of bullying or unfair behaviour constitutes unlawful discrimination.

However, Performers Theatre Company will address bullying, humiliation, intimidation, exclusion and other harmful conduct in accordance with its organisational policies, whether or not the behaviour meets a statutory definition of discrimination.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal
Sam Gibbs, as Principal, has overall operational responsibility for implementing this policy.

Responsibilities include:
- Promoting equality and inclusion throughout the organisation.
- Ensuring staff understand relevant expectations.
- Overseeing reasonable adjustment arrangements.
- Supporting fair recruitment and selection processes.
- Promoting fairness in auditions and casting.
- Responding appropriately to equality concerns.
- Ensuring relevant records are maintained.
- Monitoring organisational practices.
- Reviewing this policy and recommending improvements.

Vice-Principal
Alex Fentiman supports the Principal in implementing this policy.

Responsibilities may include:
- Promoting inclusive teaching and participation.
- Supporting staff with reasonable adjustments.
- Responding to concerns where authorised.
- Monitoring accessibility and participation.
- Supporting fair and transparent decision-making.
- Acting as an alternative senior management contact where a concern involves the Principal.

Where the Principal is the subject of a complaint, Alex may coordinate the organisational response within his delegated authority.

Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy
Sam Gibbs, as DSL, and Jess Eaton, as DDSL, are responsible for coordinating safeguarding responses where discrimination, harassment or other conduct raises concerns about a child's safety or welfare.

Not every equality complaint constitutes a safeguarding matter.

Where a safeguarding concern arises, the Safeguarding Policy must be followed.

Where the concern involves the Principal, it may be reported directly to Jess Eaton and/or Alex Fentiman.

Staff, Freelancers, Volunteers and Visiting Professionals
Individuals working on behalf of Performers must:
- Treat others fairly and respectfully.
- Model inclusive and professional behaviour.
- Avoid discriminatory language and conduct.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- Consider individual needs and reasonable adjustments.
- Apply fair and relevant criteria when making decisions.
- Report concerns through appropriate procedures.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Participate in relevant training and guidance.

Students, Parents and Carers
Students, parents and carers are expected to:
- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Avoid discriminatory or harassing behaviour.
- Support an inclusive environment.
- Raise concerns appropriately.
- Cooperate with reasonable organisational arrangements.
- Respect the privacy and dignity of others.

EQUAL ACCESS TO CLASSES AND ACTIVITIES

Performers Theatre Company aims to provide fair and inclusive access to its classes, programmes, workshops and performance opportunities.

Admission and participation decisions should be based on relevant and lawful criteria, which may include:

- Age range and suitability of the activity.
- Available capacity.
- Relevant experience or skill requirements.
- The nature of the programme.
- Appropriate safeguarding arrangements.
- Health and safety considerations.
- Individual support needs and reasonable adjustments.

Decisions must not be based on unlawful discrimination.

Where a student requires additional support, the organisation will seek to understand their needs and consider appropriate adjustments before determining whether participation is possible.

Performers recognises that not every activity is suitable for every age group or ability level. Appropriate programme requirements may be applied where they are lawful, relevant and proportionate.

The organisation will seek to communicate eligibility requirements clearly and consistently.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Performers Theatre Company recognises that disabled individuals may experience barriers to participation that are not experienced by others.

The organisation is committed to meeting its applicable duties under the Equality Act 2010, including making reasonable adjustments where required.

Adjustments may relate to:

- Teaching methods and instructions.
- Communication and information.
- Physical access and movement.
- Rehearsal or class arrangements.
- Breaks and sensory needs.
- Equipment and resources.
- Assessment or audition processes.
- Support during performances.
- Appropriate supervision and individual arrangements.

Requesting Adjustments

Students, parents, carers, staff and applicants are encouraged to communicate relevant access or support requirements.

Requests may be made through the organisation's established communication channels.

Staff must also remain alert to barriers that may require consideration, even where no formal request has been made.

Assessing Adjustments

When considering an adjustment, Performers will take account of:

- The individual's needs and circumstances.
- The nature of the activity.
- The effectiveness of the proposed adjustment.

- Practicality and available resources.
- Health and safety considerations.
- The impact on other participants.
- The organisation's applicable legal responsibilities.

Where appropriate, the individual and/or their parent or carer will be involved in identifying workable arrangements.

Adjustments must be considered individually. A blanket refusal based solely on a diagnosis, disability or additional need is not acceptable.

Where a requested adjustment cannot reasonably be implemented, the organisation should explain its decision and consider suitable alternatives.

Cost, convenience or organisational preference alone must not be treated as automatically sufficient reasons to refuse a reasonable adjustment.

The organisation will not charge disabled individuals for adjustments that it is legally required to provide.

Recording and Review

Significant agreed adjustments should be documented appropriately and communicated to relevant staff on a need-to-know basis.

Arrangements should be reviewed when circumstances change or where an adjustment is not working effectively.

Sensitive medical or disability information must be handled in accordance with data protection requirements.

INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Performers Theatre Company aims to provide an environment where all students feel encouraged, supported and appropriately challenged.

Staff should:

- Maintain high but realistic expectations.
- Recognise individual strengths and development.
- Use varied and accessible teaching methods.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Avoid humiliating or discriminatory criticism.
- Encourage confidence and participation.
- Consider individual learning and communication needs.
- Promote positive relationships.
- Challenge stereotypes and exclusion.
- Celebrate achievement without creating unnecessary comparison.

Students should be encouraged to develop their own abilities and measure progress against their individual goals.

Staff must recognise that equality of opportunity does not require identical teaching approaches for every student.

Appropriate differentiation and reasonable adjustments may be necessary to ensure meaningful participation.

Performance and Artistic Feedback

Constructive artistic feedback is an important part of performing arts education.

Feedback must be:

- Relevant to the activity.

- Age-appropriate.
- Respectful and professional.
- Focused on development.
- Delivered without humiliation or personal discrimination.

Artistic standards must never be used to justify bullying, harassment or inappropriate treatment.

FAIR AUDITIONS, CASTING AND PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Performers Theatre Company recognises that auditions and casting decisions are an important part of its activities and can have a significant impact on students' confidence and development.

The organisation is committed to fair, transparent and appropriately managed audition and casting processes.

Audition Arrangements

Where practicable, audition information should clearly communicate:

- Eligibility requirements.
- Relevant age ranges.
- Audition dates and arrangements.
- The skills or preparation required.
- Any significant role-specific requirements.
- How individuals may request reasonable adjustments.

Audition arrangements should be accessible and inclusive, subject to relevant and lawful requirements.

Casting Decisions

Casting decisions may legitimately involve artistic judgement, including consideration of:

- Vocal and performance ability.
- Acting and movement skills.
- Character interpretation.
- Suitability for the role.
- The requirements of the production.
- Ensemble balance and creative considerations.
- Age and safeguarding requirements.
- Availability and commitment.

Equality of opportunity does not mean that every performer will receive the same role or opportunity. However, decisions must be made without unlawful discrimination and should be based on relevant, consistently applied considerations.

Role-Specific Requirements and Representation

Some productions may have particular casting requirements arising from the script, creative context, licensing conditions or the nature of a role.

Any restriction connected to a protected characteristic must have a lawful basis and be assessed in the relevant context.

The organisation will seek to respect the cultural context, authenticity and representation of productions while ensuring that artistic preferences are not used as a blanket justification for unlawful discrimination.

Where legal or licensing requirements are unclear, advice should be obtained before imposing restrictions.

Feedback and Communication

Casting outcomes should be communicated respectfully.

Where feedback is provided, it should be constructive, proportionate and focused on relevant performance considerations.

Staff must not make discriminatory, humiliating or inappropriate comments about an individual's identity, body, appearance or personal circumstances.

Concerns about unfair treatment in auditions or casting may be raised through the reporting procedures in this policy.

RECRUITMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Performers Theatre Company is committed to fair and lawful recruitment and employment practices.

Recruitment and engagement decisions should be based on relevant factors, including:

- Qualifications and experience.
- Professional competence.
- Suitability for the role.
- Safeguarding requirements.
- Relevant skills and abilities.
- Availability and operational requirements.
- Appropriate references and checks.

The organisation will not unlawfully discriminate in recruitment, selection, employment, training, promotion or termination.

Safer Recruitment

Where individuals will work with children, safer recruitment and safeguarding requirements must be followed.

These may include appropriate references, identity verification, eligibility checks and DBS checks where legally permitted or required.

Equality obligations and safeguarding requirements must be considered together.

Reasonable Adjustments for Applicants and Staff

Applicants and staff may request reasonable adjustments to recruitment, working arrangements or other relevant processes.

Requests will be considered in accordance with applicable legal obligations.

Freelancers and Visiting Practitioners

The organisation will promote fair treatment of freelance practitioners, visiting professionals and contractors.

The legal status and protections applicable to individuals may vary according to their working arrangements.

ACCESSIBILITY OF VENUES AND FACILITIES

Performers Theatre Company operates across different venues and recognises that accessibility arrangements may vary.

The organisation will take reasonable steps to identify and reduce barriers to participation.

Considerations may include:

- Accessible entrances and routes.
- Toilets and changing facilities.
- Rehearsal and performance spaces.
- Seating and viewing arrangements.
- Communication and signage.

- Emergency evacuation.
- Sensory and environmental considerations.
- Transport and arrival arrangements.

Where an activity is held in a venue not owned or directly controlled by Performers, the organisation will liaise with the venue operator where appropriate.

Responsibilities for accessibility and reasonable adjustments must be considered according to the circumstances and applicable legal duties.

The organisation will not assume that responsibility rests entirely with the venue provider.

Where an accessibility barrier is identified, reasonable alternatives should be explored.

Any significant limitations affecting participation should be communicated appropriately.

RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE, BEHAVIOUR AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

All individuals within Performers Theatre Company are expected to use respectful and inclusive language.

Language and behaviour must not:
- Promote harmful stereotypes.
- Humiliate or intimidate others.
- Encourage discrimination or exclusion.
- Undermine an individual's dignity.
- Create a hostile or threatening environment.
- Target an individual because of a protected characteristic or personal circumstance.

Staff must model positive behaviour and challenge inappropriate conduct promptly.

Where discriminatory behaviour occurs, the organisation will consider its seriousness, context and impact.

Responses may include education, guidance, behavioural intervention, formal action or safeguarding escalation, as appropriate.

The organisation recognises that intention and impact may differ.

A claim that a comment was intended as a joke does not automatically make the behaviour acceptable.

REPORTING DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND EQUALITY CONCERNS

Any individual may raise a concern relating to discrimination, harassment, victimisation, accessibility or unfair treatment.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing.

Reporting Routes
Students may speak to any trusted member of staff.

Parents, carers, adult participants, staff and other individuals may contact the Principal or another appropriate senior member of staff.

General enquiries and reporting:
admin@performerstheatrecompany.com

Where a concern involves the Principal, it may be reported directly to Alex Fentiman (Vice-Principal).

Where the concern also raises safeguarding issues, Jess Eaton (DDSL) may be contacted.

Individuals must not be required to report a concern solely to the person whose conduct is being questioned.

Initial Response

The person receiving a concern must:

1. Listen carefully and take the matter seriously.
2. Consider whether immediate protective action is necessary.
3. Record relevant information accurately.
4. Refer the matter to the appropriate person.
5. Escalate safeguarding concerns without delay.
6. Avoid making assumptions or prejudging the outcome.

Assessment and Resolution

The organisation will consider:

- The nature and seriousness of the concern.
- Whether a protected characteristic is relevant.
- Whether immediate protective measures are required.
- Whether the matter falls under another organisational policy.
- Whether safeguarding procedures take precedence.
- Whether independent oversight is necessary.
- What further information or professional advice may be required.

Where appropriate, the organisation may obtain relevant accounts and evidence before reaching a decision. Any review or investigation must be proportionate, fair and impartial.

Where allegations involve possible abuse or criminal conduct, safeguarding or statutory procedures must take precedence over internal enquiries.

Outcomes

Possible outcomes may include:

- Clarification or explanation.
- An apology where appropriate.
- Changes to arrangements or practices.
- Reasonable adjustments.
- Additional training or guidance.
- Behavioural or disciplinary measures.
- Referral under another organisational policy.
- External safeguarding or legal advice.
- Further monitoring or review.

The organisation will communicate relevant outcomes appropriately, while respecting confidentiality and the rights of other individuals.

SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION FROM HARM

Performers Theatre Company recognises that discrimination, harassment, bullying and exclusion may have significant safeguarding implications.

Where a concern involves a child who may be at risk of harm, the Safeguarding Policy must be followed.

The DSL or DDSL will consider whether:

- Immediate protective action is required.
- Safeguarding advice should be obtained.
- Children's social care or police involvement is necessary.
- Additional support should be provided.
- Further protective arrangements are required.

Serious safeguarding allegations must not be treated solely as equality complaints or ordinary behavioural incidents.

Where a concern involves the Principal/DSL, the independent reporting arrangements established within the Safeguarding Policy apply, including the roles of Jess Eaton and Alex Fentiman.

Staff must not conduct internal investigations that could compromise statutory safeguarding enquiries.

RECORDING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

Equality-related concerns and significant incidents must be recorded appropriately.

Where relevant, incidents may be recorded in Performers Theatre Company's central Incident Log, maintained securely on Google Drive with access restricted to authorised staff.

Records should include:

- The nature of the concern.
- Relevant dates and individuals involved.
- Factual information and available evidence.
- Immediate protective action.
- Assessment and decisions.
- Reasons for decisions.
- Relevant communication.
- Agreed actions and responsible individuals.
- Follow-up and review outcomes.

Employment-related complaints, sensitive equality information and safeguarding records must be managed through appropriately restricted arrangements rather than automatically being placed in a general staff-accessible Incident Log.

Personal information must be handled in accordance with the organisation's GDPR Policy and applicable data protection requirements.

Information must only be shared where there is an appropriate and lawful reason to do so.

Individuals raising concerns will be treated sensitively, and retaliation for raising a genuine concern will not be tolerated.

MONITORING, TRAINING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Principal and Leadership Team are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy.

This may include:

- Reviewing reported concerns and incidents.
- Considering feedback from students, parents and staff.
- Identifying barriers to participation.
- Reviewing reasonable adjustment arrangements.
- Monitoring accessibility issues.
- Reviewing recruitment and audition practices.
- Considering patterns of discriminatory behaviour.
- Reviewing relevant staff training.
- Identifying improvements to organisational procedures.

Staff will receive appropriate information and guidance concerning equality, inclusion and their responsibilities.

Additional training may be provided where relevant to an individual's role or where organisational needs indicate that further development is required.

The organisation will review this policy annually and sooner where significant incidents, legal developments or operational changes require it.

RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

This policy should be read alongside:

- Governance & Compliance Framework.
- Safeguarding Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Staff Code of Conduct.
- Staff Handbook.
- Student Code of Conduct.
- Parent/Carer Code of Conduct.
- Complaints Policy.
- GDPR Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Risk Assessment Policy.
- Production and Rehearsal Policy.
- Social Media Policy.
- Relevant recruitment and safer recruitment procedures.

Relevant legal considerations include:

- Equality Act 2010.
- Human Rights Act 1998, where applicable.
- Children Act 1989.
- Children Act 2004.
- Data Protection Act 2018.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation.
- Applicable employment and safeguarding legislation.

The precise duties and protections applicable to particular situations will depend on the nature of the activity, the individual's legal status and the circumstances.

APPENDIX 1

Equality Concern and Reasonable Adjustment Procedure

A. Reporting an Equality Concern

Step 1 - Receive the Concern
Listen carefully, take the concern seriously and establish whether immediate action is required.

Step 2 - Identify the Appropriate Reporting Route
Refer the concern to the Principal or appropriate senior member of staff.

Where the concern involves the Principal, refer it to Alex Fentiman.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, follow the Safeguarding Policy and contact the DSL/DDSL or statutory services as appropriate.

Step 3 - Record the Concern
Document relevant facts, immediate action and any necessary confidentiality arrangements.

Step 4 - Assess and Respond
Consider the nature of the concern, relevant equality obligations, appropriate protective measures and any further enquiries required.

Step 5 - Agree and Implement Action
Determine appropriate action, responsibilities and communication arrangements.

Step 6 - Monitor and Review
Review the effectiveness of the response and determine whether further action is necessary.

B. Requesting a Reasonable Adjustment

Step 1 - Identify the Barrier
The individual, parent/carer or relevant staff member identifies an access or participation difficulty.

Step 2 - Discuss Individual Needs
Consider the individual's circumstances, preferences and relevant information.

Step 3 - Explore Adjustments
Identify reasonable and effective options, taking account of applicable legal duties.

Step 4 - Agree Arrangements
Confirm the adjustments to be implemented and who is responsible.

Step 5 - Record and Communicate
Document significant arrangements and inform relevant staff on a need-to-know basis.

Step 6 - Review
Check whether the adjustment is effective and revise arrangements where necessary.