Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (Students & Learners) Policy

1. Purpose

East Sussex School of Circus Arts ("ESSCA") is committed to providing an inclusive, welcoming learning environment where all students and learners are treated with dignity and respect. We aim to remove barriers to participation wherever reasonably possible, while maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding and physical safety.

This policy explains how we promote equality, prevent discrimination, and support students and learners to access our education and training.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Applicants and auditionees for ESSCA programmes (including BTEC learners)
- Enrolled BTEC learners
- After-school club participants
- Holiday camp participants
- Private lesson participants
- Parents/carers and visitors while on ESSCA premises (in relation to expected conduct)
- Partner organisations supporting learners on site (e.g., SEND schools)

3. Our commitment

We will:

- Comply with the Equality Act 2010 and relevant education and safeguarding requirements.
- Promote a culture of respect and inclusion.
- Take reasonable steps to prevent discrimination, harassment, bullying, and victimisation.
- Consider and implement reasonable adjustments where practicable and safe.
- Make decisions transparently, based on clear criteria and risk assessment.

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4. Protected characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010, the protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins)
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

5. What equality and inclusion mean at ESSCA (a physical training environment)

Circus and aerial training is physically demanding and involves managed risk. Inclusion at ESSCA means we will work creatively to support participation, but we must also ensure:

- The safety of the individual learner
- The safety of other learners
- Safe staffing ratios and appropriate supervision
- That equipment, rigging, and spotting requirements can be met

5.1 Reasonable adjustments and safety limits

ESSCA will consider reasonable adjustments for disabled and neurodivergent learners. However, there may be circumstances where:

- A particular activity cannot be offered safely, even with adjustments
- A programme (for example, certain aerial disciplines or the BTEC course) cannot be delivered to a learners needs within safe ratios, available staffing, or the practical requirements of the curriculum

Where this happens, we will:

- Explain the decision clearly and respectfully
- Explore alternative options (where available)
- Signpost to other suitable provision where appropriate

5.2 Alternative pathways and additional support

Where group delivery is not safe or practicable, ESSCA may be able to offer alternatives such as:

- Private sessions (1:1) for learners who require additional support in aerial clubs
- Adjusted learning activities within a discipline (where safe)
- Supported participation where a partner organisation (e.g., a SEND school) provides additional staff to meet ratio and support needs

Any alternative pathway will be agreed in advance and kept under review.

6. Admissions, auditions and enrolment (fair access)

ESSCA aims to ensure that admissions and auditions are fair and transparent.

We will:

- Provide clear information about course demands, physical requirements, and safety expectations
- Invite applicants/auditionees to share any access needs so we can consider adjustments
- Consider adjustments to the audition/interview process where practicable (e.g., additional time, alternative ways to demonstrate capability)

Selection decisions will be based on published criteria, programme requirements, and safety considerations.

7. Learner conduct and respectful culture

ESSCA expects all learners to contribute to a respectful environment.

We do not tolerate:

- Bullying, intimidation, or exclusion
- Harassment or discriminatory language/behaviour (including racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or disability-related harassment)
- Sexual harassment or unwanted sexualised behaviour

Concerns will be addressed promptly and may result in consequences in line with ESSCAs behaviour/disciplinary approach for learners and/or the Complaints Policy.

8. Safeguarding and welfare

Safeguarding is central to ESSCAs work with children and young people.

- Any concern that a learner may be at risk of harm will be managed under ESSCAs Safeguarding Policy.
- Where a concern relates to both equality and safeguarding, safeguarding procedures take priority.

9. Raising concerns and complaints

ESSCA encourages learners and parents/carers to raise concerns early.

9.1 Informal route

Where appropriate, concerns can be raised with:

- The relevant tutor/instructor
- The programme lead
- A senior member of staff on site

9.2 Formal route

If informal resolution is not appropriate or does not resolve the issue, concerns should be raised under ESSCAs Complaints Policy.

9.3 No retaliation

ESSCA will not tolerate victimisation of any learner or parent/carer who raises a concern in good faith.

10. Information sharing and confidentiality

ESSCA will handle personal information sensitively and in line with data protection requirements. We will only share information on a need-to-know basis, particularly where safeguarding or safety is involved.

11. Training and implementation

ESSCA will support staff to deliver this policy through:

- Induction and ongoing training (including safeguarding and equality awareness)
- Clear risk assessment and safety processes
- Consistent expectations for learner behaviour and respectful communication