



RIVERSIDE VIRTUAL COLLEGE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES & ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Legislation	Education/ Other
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1. Purpose and scope

Riverside Virtual College (RVC) is committed to equality of opportunity, inclusion and accessibility for pupils, prospective pupils, parents and carers, staff, visitors and others who engage with the College. This policy applies to the College's online learning environment, communications, curriculum, pastoral and safeguarding arrangements, admissions and attendance processes, employment practices, and any physical premises or face-to-face activity used by RVC.

The College will take proportionate steps to remove barriers, prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. Where the public sector equality duty applies to the College, it will have due regard to the three aims in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

2. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has been reviewed with regard to the following legislation and Department for Education guidance, as applicable to the College's legal status and provision:

- Equality Act 2010, including the protected characteristics, reasonable-adjustment duties and accessibility planning requirements that apply to schools.

- Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2026, in force from 1 September 2026.
- Working together to safeguard children, updated March 2026.
- Providing remote education: guidance for schools.
- Working together to improve school attendance, updated July 2026.
- Department for Education digital and technology standards, including filtering and monitoring and cyber-security standards.
- Human Rights Act 1998 and relevant children's rights principles.

The Headteacher and proprietor/governing body should confirm at each review which statutory duties apply to RVC's particular registration and governance status. Where a duty does not apply directly, the College may still adopt the relevant standard as good practice.

3. Equality principles

RVC recognises that people may experience different barriers and that treating everyone fairly does not always mean treating everyone in the same way. The College will:

- value every pupil and member of the College community and promote dignity, respect and belonging;
- not unlawfully discriminate because of a protected characteristic, including disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, and age where the Equality Act applies; employment duties also include marriage and civil partnership;
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, staff and other users where required, including adjustments to digital systems, teaching methods, communication and assessment arrangements;
- identify and reduce barriers affecting pupils with SEND, including barriers to accessing remote learning;
- challenge prejudice, discriminatory language, harassment, sexual harassment and prejudice-related bullying, including conduct occurring online;
- use evidence, consultation and pupil/parent voice to inform equality objectives and accessibility priorities.

4. Accessibility in a virtual and blended environment

Accessibility at RVC includes access to information, teaching, communication, safeguarding support and participation in College life. The College will anticipate common barriers rather than relying only on individuals to request help.

- Digital platforms and learning materials should be usable with common accessibility features and assistive technology wherever reasonably practicable.
- Staff should use clear structure, readable formatting, meaningful headings, captions/transcripts where appropriate, accessible document formats, and alternatives to image-only or audio-only information.
- Reasonable alternatives should be considered where a pupil cannot access live video, audio, timed online activity or a particular digital platform because of disability or SEND.
- Pupils should be able to access pastoral and safeguarding support through clear, age-appropriate routes during remote learning.

- Where a pupil has an EHC plan, RVC will work with the relevant local authority and parents/carers, as required, so that applicable statutory duties continue to be met during remote education.
- Any physical premises, examinations, enrichment or face-to-face sessions arranged by RVC will be considered separately for physical access, sensory needs, evacuation and reasonable adjustments.

5. Safeguarding, online safety and KCSIE 2026

Equality and accessibility arrangements must operate alongside the College's safeguarding and child protection procedures. KCSIE 2026 makes clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that all staff must read Part One in full. The College will ensure staff know the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputies, reporting routes and referral procedures.

For a virtual setting, particular attention will be given to online harms, safe virtual lessons, professional boundaries, pupil-to-pupil abuse, child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, exploitation, bullying, and signs that a pupil may need early help or statutory intervention. Accessibility adjustments must never create unmanaged safeguarding risks; equally, safeguarding arrangements should not unnecessarily exclude disabled pupils or pupils with SEND.

RVC will maintain appropriate filtering and monitoring arrangements for systems and devices it controls, with clear governance, review and escalation processes. The College will also maintain proportionate cyber-security measures. Staff, pupils and parents/carers will receive information about safe use of online learning systems and how to report concerns.

6. Curriculum, teaching and assessment

- Curriculum planning will promote inclusion and avoid unlawful discrimination and stereotyping.
- Teaching materials will, where appropriate, reflect diverse backgrounds and experiences and be reviewed for accessibility.
- Teachers will consider reasonable adjustments, SEND support and differentiated approaches without lowering legitimate curriculum expectations.
- Assessment access arrangements will be identified and implemented in line with the applicable awarding-body rules and evidence requirements.
- Pupils who need additional literacy, communication, sensory, executive-function or emotional-regulation support will be offered proportionate strategies based on assessed need.

7. Attendance, engagement and welfare

Attendance and engagement in a virtual setting will be monitored in a way that distinguishes absence from technical or accessibility barriers. RVC will follow applicable attendance law and the Department for Education's Working together to improve school attendance guidance.

- Patterns of non-attendance, non-engagement or sudden changes in online participation will be reviewed for possible safeguarding, SEND, health, family or technology-related barriers.

- Support will be offered early and, where appropriate, planned with the pupil, parents/carers, local authority, social worker, Virtual School Head or other professionals.
- Where a child has a social worker or is looked after, the College will support effective information-sharing and partnership working in accordance with statutory safeguarding and attendance arrangements.

8. Prejudice-related incidents and bullying

RVC opposes prejudice and harassment connected with disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or other protected status. This includes racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, misogyny, homophobia, biphobia, transphobic bullying, disablism and other prejudice-related conduct.

Incidents, including online incidents, will be reported, recorded, assessed and responded to under the relevant behaviour, safeguarding, anti-bullying and staff procedures. Safeguarding concerns will be referred to the DSL without delay. Records will be reviewed to identify patterns and inform preventive action.

9. Roles and responsibilities

The proprietor/governing body is responsible for oversight of equality, accessibility and safeguarding duties applicable to the College, for ensuring appropriate policies are in place, and for holding leaders to account.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementation, staff awareness, resources, training, monitoring and action where concerns or breaches arise.

The DSL is responsible for safeguarding leadership, including safeguarding implications of remote education and online safety, in accordance with KCSIE 2026.

The SENCO or person leading SEND provision is responsible for coordinating SEND support and contributing to reasonable-adjustment and accessibility planning.

All staff are expected to promote inclusion, follow safeguarding procedures, make agreed adjustments, challenge prejudice and report concerns promptly.

10. Staff recruitment, development and conduct

RVC will apply fair and lawful recruitment, employment and professional-development practices. Recruitment and safeguarding checks will follow KCSIE 2026 and other applicable requirements. Staff and volunteers will receive appropriate induction and refresher training in safeguarding, online safety, equality, SEND and accessibility relevant to their roles.

From 1 September 2026, the legal definition of regulated activity with children changed by removal of the supervision exemption. RVC will ensure its safer-recruitment and DBS decision-making reflects the current law and KCSIE requirements.

11. Information, communication and consultation

- Key policies and reporting routes will be communicated in formats that are reasonably accessible to pupils, parents/carers and staff.
- The College will seek feedback from disabled pupils, pupils with SEND,

parents/carers and staff when reviewing significant accessibility barriers or changes.

- Confidential information will be shared only where lawful and necessary, including where safeguarding requires information sharing.

12. Equality objectives and monitoring

RVC will set specific and measurable equality objectives where required and will keep them under review. Monitoring may include participation, attendance, attainment, exclusions/suspensions where applicable, complaints, bullying and prejudice-related incidents, safeguarding themes, accessibility requests and the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments.

Data will be handled in accordance with data-protection requirements and used proportionately. Leaders will look for patterns and take action where evidence indicates unequal access, outcomes or avoidable barriers.

13. Breaches, complaints and review

Concerns about discrimination, accessibility or failure to implement an agreed adjustment should be raised promptly with the College. Complaints will be considered under the relevant complaints, safeguarding, staff or pupil procedure. Nothing in this policy prevents a person from using any statutory complaint or appeal route available to them.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, College provision or identified risks materially change.

Appendix A – Accessibility action plan

The action plan below replaces the previous premises-led plan with a virtual-first plan while retaining provision for any physical or face-to-face activity. Individual reasonable adjustments should be recorded separately where appropriate.

Priority / barrier	Current / expected provision	Actions and evidence	Review
Digital access and assistive technology	Core learning systems should support common browser/device accessibility features and assistive technology.	Test key platforms for keyboard access, zoom, screen-reader compatibility and captioning; document known limitations and reasonable alternatives; review procurement for accessibility.	Termly and on material platform change
Accessible learning materials	Staff provide structured online materials and can adapt formats where needed.	Use headings, readable fonts, sufficient contrast, descriptive links, alt text where meaningful, captions/transcripts where appropriate, and accessible Word/PDF formats. Avoid essential information being available only as an image.	Ongoing; sample audit termly
Autism / communication / executive function	Predictable routines, clear instructions and individual support are used according to need.	Publish weekly schedules in advance where practicable; give clear lesson routines and change notifications; offer chunked instructions, visual supports, processing time and agreed communication methods.	Individual review plus termly practice review

Dyslexia / literacy	Alternative formats and literacy support are available according to assessed need.	Use uncluttered layouts, editable text, text-to-speech compatible formats and reasonable assessment adjustments; provide targeted reading/literacy intervention where identified.	Termly
Visual or hearing impairment	Adjustments are planned individually.	Provide scalable text, accessible documents, captions/transcripts, compatible audio arrangements and alternative communication methods; seek specialist advice where required.	Individual review
Anxiety / emotional regulation	Remote learning can reduce some environmental pressures but can create isolation, camera, communication or workload barriers.	Agree low-arousal communication and participation options where appropriate; provide predictable contact routes, pastoral support and safeguarding escalation; avoid making camera use the only means of participation unless necessary and justified.	Individual review; termly themes
Attendance and engagement barriers	Attendance and engagement are monitored.	Distinguish non-attendance from technical/accessibility barriers; contact families early; consider safeguarding and SEND; coordinate with relevant professionals including	Weekly monitoring; strategic termly review

		social workers or Virtual School Heads where applicable.	
Online safety / filtering and monitoring	Safeguarding procedures apply to remote learning.	Maintain filtering/monitoring arrangements for systems RVC controls; assign roles; review effectiveness; record incidents; ensure DSL oversight and staff/pupil reporting routes.	At least annually and following incidents/changes
Physical access for face-to-face activity	Adjustments depend on venue and activity.	Risk-assess venues, step-free access, accessible toilets, sensory environment, emergency evacuation and travel/access needs before attendance; communicate arrangements in advance.	Before each relevant activity
Staff capability	Training is provided according to role.	Maintain annual safeguarding training and updates; provide role-relevant CPD on equality, SEND, accessible digital practice, online safety and reasonable adjustments.	Annual plan; induction for new staff