Equal Opportunities Policy

Summit Explorers Ltd.

Policy owner	Dr James Wilkinson, Director
Approved/reviewed	September 2026
Review cycle	Annual, and sooner after a material legal, operational or learning change
Applies to	Participants, parents/carers, schools and other clients, employees, directors, self-employed leaders, contractors, volunteers and applicants

1. Purpose and commitment

Summit Explorers Ltd. is committed to equal opportunity, inclusion, dignity and respect. We want every participant, family, client and member of our workforce to be treated fairly and to have an equitable opportunity to take part in, benefit from and contribute to our outdoor education, DofE expedition support, climbing and related activities.

We do not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, bullying or prejudice. We will take reasonable, proportionate steps to remove barriers to participation and employment while maintaining safety, safeguarding and the essential requirements of an activity.

2. Legal framework and protected characteristics

This policy is informed by the Equality Act 2010. The Act protects people from discrimination in employment and in the provision of services. Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Summit Explorers is an independent provider, not a public authority, and does not claim that the Public Sector Equality Duty applies to all of its work. When delivering services for a client school or another public body, we will work constructively with that client to support its equality duties and agreed inclusion arrangements.

3. Scope and principles

- We make decisions about recruitment, engagement, training, fees, bookings, group arrangements, activity delivery, equipment and support on relevant, lawful and proportionate grounds - never because of a protected characteristic or an assumption about a person's ability.

- We recognise that treating people fairly does not always mean treating everybody identically. Reasonable adjustments or other support may be needed to achieve equitable access.
- We use respectful language, challenge stereotyping and take concerns seriously. No person will be disadvantaged for raising an equality concern in good faith or supporting someone else's complaint.
- Safety and safeguarding decisions are based on individual assessment, not blanket exclusion. Where an adjustment cannot safely be made, we will explain the reasons, consider alternatives and work with the person, parent/carer and client school where appropriate.

4. Inclusive services and reasonable adjustments

We welcome participants with disabilities, neurodivergence, special educational needs and other access requirements. We invite relevant information before an activity so that we can plan with the participant, parent/carer and client school as appropriate. Information is kept confidential and shared only with people who need it to provide safe, appropriate support.

Reasonable adjustments are considered case by case. Depending on the individual and activity, these may include advance route and programme information; smaller groups; a modified pace or rest plan; additional supervision; adapted communication; dietary planning; equipment support; suitable transport arrangements; reduced carried loads or transfer of agreed kit between campsites; and a different route, venue or activity format.

An adjustment does not have to compromise essential safety or safeguarding controls, fundamentally alter an activity beyond what is reasonable, or create disproportionate risk or cost. If participation in a particular format is not suitable, we will explore a safe alternative where reasonably possible rather than simply excluding the person.

5. Dignity, conduct and participation

All participants are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. Staff create an environment in which discriminatory language, racist behaviour, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, ableism, religious intolerance and other prejudice are challenged promptly and appropriately. Behaviour is managed in line with the Staff Code of Conduct, safeguarding arrangements and any client-school procedure.

We take particular care in the outdoor and overnight context. Grouping, accommodation, clothing, privacy, changing, toilets and dietary arrangements are considered sensitively, individually and in accordance with safeguarding, welfare and risk-assessment requirements. Staff do not make assumptions about a person's identity, family circumstances, faith, capability or support needs.

Any concern involving a child, child-on-child abuse, an adult's conduct or a possible safeguarding matter is dealt with immediately under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, not solely as an equal-opportunities complaint.

6. Recruitment, employment and engagement

Recruitment and selection are based on the genuine requirements of the role: relevant skills, qualifications, experience, competence, safer-recruitment checks and ability to perform essential duties safely. Advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications, interview arrangements, decisions, training and working arrangements must be fair, consistent and free from discriminatory wording or criteria.

Applicants and staff may request reasonable adjustments for recruitment, training or work. Examples may include an accessible interview format, adjustment to working arrangements, equipment or communications support. We consider each request fairly and confidentially. Questions about health or disability are only asked where lawful and genuinely necessary, such as to establish adjustments, essential job requirements or health and safety needs.

Staff, contractors and volunteers are expected to support this policy, complete relevant training and raise discriminatory conduct or barriers to the Director. Breach of this policy may lead to action under the relevant contractual, disciplinary, safeguarding or complaints procedure.

7. Working with schools, families and partners

Before a school or organisation activity, Summit Explorers and the client agree relevant inclusion, medical, safeguarding, supervision, transport, accommodation and communication arrangements. The client school remains responsible for information and decisions within its own remit; Summit Explorers remains responsible for making fair, safe decisions about its own service and staff.

We work openly with families and participants wherever appropriate. We respect privacy and will only seek information relevant to safe, inclusive provision. A parent/carer or participant should tell us about access needs as early as possible, but late disclosure will be considered wherever reasonably practicable.

8. Raising a concern or complaint

Informal concern	Where safe and appropriate, raise the matter with the event leader or Director so it can be addressed promptly.
Formal complaint	Use the Complaints Policy. Formal complaints can be emailed to james@summitexplorers.co.uk or sent to the Company's registered address. Reasonable adjustments are available for making a complaint.
Concern about the Director	The Complaints Policy provides for an independent person to review complaints concerning the Director; he will not determine them.

Safeguarding	Use the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy immediately for any safeguarding or adult-conduct concern.

Complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are investigated fairly and confidentially. The Company will consider whether immediate protective action, a safeguarding response, disciplinary action, mediation or another route is required. No one should be retaliated against for raising a concern in good faith.

9. Monitoring, records and review

The Director monitors concerns, complaints, adjustments, recruitment practices, participation barriers and feedback to identify patterns and improvements. Monitoring information is collected only where lawful, necessary and proportionate, and is kept securely in accordance with the Data Protection/Privacy Notice. We do not require people to disclose protected-characteristic information in order to access services.

This policy is reviewed at least annually and after any significant equality, safeguarding, complaints or operational learning. It is read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Complaints Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Safer Recruitment Procedure, Staff Code of Conduct, Risk Assessment Procedure and Data Protection/Privacy Notice.

Appendix A: Inclusion planning checklist

- Ask early and respectfully what would help the person take part; avoid assumptions and obtain consent before sharing information.
- Identify barriers in travel, kit, routes, pace, communication, food, overnight welfare, changing/privacy, supervision and emergency arrangements.
- Agree reasonable, safe adjustments with the participant, parent/carer and client school where appropriate; record the plan and brief only relevant staff.
- Review arrangements during delivery. Adapt where needed, protect dignity and report any discrimination or safeguarding concern promptly.