

WHSG Statement on Academic Freedom

At Wallington High School for Girls, we recognise that viewpoint diversity, intellectual challenge and civil debate are essential components of any education that seeks to empower young minds and prepare them for life in the modern world. We also recognise that the same is true of any community – including our own – that is truly committed to the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

In practice, this means that at this school there may be times when students are exposed to material or points of view that they strongly oppose. However, promoting intellectual engagement with such material or views is not the same as endorsing them, and neither does this mean that the expression of hate speech by any members of our community will be tolerated in this school.

To clarify, it is important to note that intellectual engagement with hateful ideas is not the same as students or staff expressing hate speech. For example, studying fascism is not the same as expressing/endorsing fascism. This is a subtle and important distinction, but necessary if students are going to learn about hate speech and the destructive role it has played in the world.

Types of hate speech include¹:

Demonisation: Presenting a particular group (often but not always a minority) in overwhelmingly negative terms (e.g., characterising them as inherently malicious, dishonest, or threatening).

Accusation in a mirror: Claiming that a particular group is conspiring to attack the wider population and poses an existential threat.

Toxic misinformation: False stories linking a particular group to violent, criminal, or morally corrupt behaviour.

Dehumanisation: Portraying a particular group as subhuman (e.g., likening them to vermin, parasites, or disease).

In addition to showing zero tolerance to expressions of hate speech, to further cultivate and uphold civil debate we ask that all members of the school community observe the following principles.

Where possible, start by looking for areas of agreement rather than disagreement.

Make the most respectful interpretation of each other's perspectives.

Give each other the benefit of the doubt.

Listen with an open mind.

Please note that apart from upholding fundamental British values², including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, teachers have a legal duty to refrain from promoting partisan political views/activities, and to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views on political issues. In this respect, apart from upholding British values, students should not expect teachers to express or take a partisan position on political issues.

Finally, please notify the school of any expressions of hate speech. Students can speak to a member of staff (e.g., form tutor, head of year, etc.) or use the anonymous SHARP system. All reports will be treated with respect and investigated.

¹ [Stop Funding Hate](#)

² The use of 'British' here does not mean exclusivity, but a national commitment to a shared set of values, which can also be found in other parts of the world.