

EQUALITY & ANTI DISCRIMINATION INFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

As an Academy supporting young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND), our approach is necessarily highly individualised. For us, equality of opportunity means working hard for each individual pupil to break down their barriers to learning and building their capacity to learn and live as independently as possible. Avoiding discrimination means pro-actively addressing issues in the systems or attitudes that may promote such problems. Protected characteristics play a role only in so far as pupils with a physical or learning disability may require special consideration when planning their provision to ensure they are able to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers.

Our commitment to equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination is not born out of simple adherence to Government Acts or Local Authority Policy. Rather, it is a long-held and deeply-felt belief that all people should be treated with respect and supported to fulfil their potential regardless of any Protected Characteristics. Whilst the bulk of this web-page is naturally devoted to pupils, our core belief in equality & anti-discrimination extends to our approach to recruiting & supporting staff in our challenging & ever-changing work environment.

2. LEGISLATION & GUIDANCE

Our approach is entirely in keeping with current legislation and complies with:

- The Equality Act 2010, which introduced the public sector equality duty and protects people from discrimination (Hereafter referred to as “The Act”)
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, which require schools to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the public sector equality duty and to publish equality objectives

Our Approach is also based on Department for Education (DfE) guidance: The Equality Act 2010 and schools.

Our approach also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. AIMS

The Academy aims to meet its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

“The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the ‘general duty’) that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and Academies, and extends to certain protected characteristics:

- race
- disability

- sex
- *age
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- pregnancy and maternity
- gender reassignment

This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011. It has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it,
- Foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

(*age as a protected characteristic does not apply to pupils in schools. Schools therefore remain free to admit and organise children in age groups and to treat pupils in ways appropriate to their age and stage of development without risk of legal challenge)”

from “The Equality Act 2010 and schools”

4. ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION

- The Academy is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and complies with non-discrimination provisions.
- Where relevant, our policies include reference to the importance of avoiding discrimination and other prohibited conduct.
- All staff are asked to sign a code of conduct which expressly forbids discrimination and other prohibited conduct, as defined in The Act.

5. ADVANCING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

As set out in the DfE guidance on the Equality Act, the school aims to advance equality of opportunity by:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people which are connected to a particular characteristic they have (e.g. pupils with disabilities, or gay pupils who are being subjected to homophobic bullying)
- Taking steps to meet the particular needs of people who have a particular characteristic (e.g. enabling Muslim pupils to pray at prescribed times)
- Encouraging people who have a particular characteristic to participate fully in any activities (e.g. encouraging all pupils to be involved in the full range of school societies)

6. FOSTERING GOOD RELATIONS

The school aims to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it by:

- Promoting tolerance, friendship and understanding of a range of religions and cultures through different aspects of our curriculum. This includes teaching in Relationships & Sex Education (RSE), Religious Education (RE), and Personal, Social,

Health and Economic Education (PSHE), but also activities in other curriculum areas. For example, through our “Culture Weeks” where the focus for number of different lessons & experiences throughout the week will be based on a chosen culture.

- Holding assemblies dealing with relevant issues. Pupils will be encouraged to take a lead in such assemblies and we will also invite external speakers to contribute
- Working with our local community. This includes inviting leaders of local faith groups to speak at assemblies, and organising school trips and activities based around the local community
- Where our experience of a particular group or special characteristics is limited we will seek support from people and groups who have specialist knowledge about particular characteristics, which helps inform and develop our approach (e.g. EAL support, gender reassignment specialists)

7. PUBLISHING INFORMATION

The Act requires the annual publication of Equality Information that demonstrates how we eliminate discrimination and advance equal opportunities.

“It is also important to note that the published information does not necessarily have to be statistical data. Many other kinds of information can be used to show how the school is promoting equality, such as publishing its policies online.”

from “The Equality Act 2010 and schools”

In our case, performance indicators can help us understand differences between pupils with similar barriers to learning but tell us little about the performance of pupils with shared or different protected characteristics.

In an individualised curriculum we would target an individual’s needs rather than groups defined by (for example) gender or race.

Publishing data that compares performance, in the way described above, would demonstrate nothing about our attitude to equality nor our ability to eliminate discrimination.

Therefore, in-line with the requirements contained in The Act (see 5.15 above), we include on this page, reference to Academy Documents (Section 9) which support equality & seek to eliminate discrimination and review this list annually to ensure all policies contained:-

- are up-to-date
- make clear reference to equality issues

In addition we must publish Equality Objectives (section 10) every four years

“Schools are free to choose the equality objectives that best suit their individual circumstances and contribute to the welfare of their pupils and the school community. Objectives are not intended to be burdensome or a ‘tick box’ exercise, but they do need to be specific and measurable. They should be used as a tool to help improve the school experience of a range of different pupils. A school should set as many objectives as it believes are appropriate to its size and circumstances; the objectives should fit the school’s needs and should be achievable.”

from “The Equality Act 2010 and schools”

Our published objectives are necessarily broad since our numbers are small and our whole approach is already highly individualised. In our case, grouping pupils would blunt our approach by drawing them together for analysis and support rather than identifying smaller cohorts as might be the case in larger, mainstream schools.

“It will be up to schools themselves to decide in what format they publish equality information. For most schools, the simplest approach may be to set up an equalities page on their website where all this information is present or links to it are available. The regulations are not prescriptive and it will be entirely up to schools to decide how they publish the information, so long as it is accessible to those members of the school community and the public who want to see it.”

from “The Equality Act 2010 and schools”

This web-page is our chosen method for publishing information as required by the Act.

8. EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS IN DECISION-MAKING

The school ensures it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made.

The school always considers the impact of significant decisions on particular groups. For example, when a school trip or activity is being planned, the school considers whether the trip:

- Cuts across any religious holidays
- Is accessible to pupils with disabilities
- Has equivalent facilities for boys and girls

9. LINKS WITH OTHER ACADEMY DOCUMENTS

Our approach is an integral part of how we work and can be found running as a thread through the following documents:

- Accessibility plan
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy
- Complaints Procedures
- PSHE policy
- RSE policy
- RE policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

(please note, the following documents relate to governors, recruitment or staffing & are not available on our web-site)

- Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Governors Standing Orders & Code of Conduct
- Parental leave Policy

10. EQUALITY OBJECTIVE (UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2020)

As described earlier on this page:

“Schools are free to choose the equality objectives that best suit their individual circumstances and contribute to the welfare of their pupils and the school community. Objectives are not intended to be burdensome or a ‘tick box’ exercise, but they do need to be specific and measurable.”

from “The Equality Act 2010 and schools”

“Examples of appropriate objectives are:

- to increase participation by black pupils in after school activities
- to narrow the gap in performance of disabled pupils
- to reduce exclusion rates for black boys
- to increase understanding between religious groups
- to reduce the number of homophobic incidents
- to raise attainment in English for boys
- to encourage girls to consider non-stereotyped career options
- to anticipate the needs of incoming pupils from a new group, such as traveller children”

from “The Equality Act 2010 and schools”

Our numbers of Black & Ethnic Minority Groups (BAME), and traveller children are so small as to render any data analysis of little use. We may not report on the progress/performance of any group consisting of less than 3 children in any case. All of our pupils have SEND. We are thankfully relatively free from racist or homophobic incident; our PSHE & RSE programmes proactively support positive attitudes towards race and gender.

We do not routinely analyse data based on gender since, as described above, SEND is the key barrier to learning for all of our pupils regardless of their gender.

In the light of all of this, our objective targets an area we know to be of concern and one where we know we can promote equality.

Objective 2020-24

We know that good attendance at school has a significant impact on pupils' performance. Our overall school target is 93%. This relatively low number is a reflection of a number of pupils where chronic/ongoing medical issues impact on their attendance. However, whilst our overall attendance figure (pre covid-19) was 92.7% the figure amongst pupils in receipt of pupil premium falls to 88.2%.

Our objective is to eliminate this disparity. We aim to achieve this in the following ways.

- We have a dedicated attendance team, which consists of the Assistant Headteacher, and member of admin staff. They will meet weekly to review attendance figures and highlight the pupil premium students who are falling below 95% attendance. The attendance team will contact home in cases where we feel that attendance is becoming an issue, for example, if we see patterns in non-attendance or there is an unexplained absence.
- The attendance team will liaise with the home school support worker in order to contact families of students identified as pupil premium where attendance is becoming a concern (below 93%) to offer support as necessary.
- Students will be rewarded for good or improved attendance to school.
- We work closely with other agencies, as appropriate to the individual pupil, to promote good attendance and tackle non-attendance.

Finally, whilst we are aware that, “A school should set as many objectives as it believes are appropriate to its size and circumstances”. We fully accept that we need to consider finding more than one appropriate objective and that the one we have chosen thus far relates to an area already attracting funding and covered by separate legislation.

We are actively seeking support from the Local Authority and other partners to identify who might help us in developing additional objectives that support our commitment to equality.