



Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership

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LST: AWI

EQUALITY ACT POLICY

1. Purpose of Statement and Guiding Principles

The purpose of this statement is to define the Trust's commitment to equality and diversity and represents our commitment to a common set of values and objectives, and a consistent approach to communicating, implementing and monitoring the statement.

The Trust and its member academies/schools are committed to equality in both employment and education provision. We aim to ensure that students, parents, governors, trustees, employees, contractors, partners, clients and those who may potentially join the Trust community, are treated fairly, and with dignity and respect.

This policy encompasses the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Trust recognises that it is also unlawful to discriminate by association or perception, e.g. treating a student unfairly based on the Protected Characteristics of their parents or other family members.

This statement recognises the four types of unlawful behaviour

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation

Every possible step will be taken into account in the aim of ensuring individuals are treated fairly and decisions are based on objective criteria.

2. Public Sector Equality Duty

The Trust and its member academies/schools are fully aware of the requirement, in carrying out their functions, 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.

Due regard means giving relevant and proportionate consideration to the duty. For the Trust and its member academies/schools this means that:

- We will be aware of the duty and have due regard when making decisions and will assess whether it may have a particular implication for people with a particular protected characteristic.
- We will consider equality implications before and the time a policy is developed and will keep those implications under review on a continuing basis.
- We will ensure that the duty is integrated into the carrying out of the school/the Trust functions.

In accordance with its obligations under the [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) Regulations 2011](#), the Trust will draw up and publish equality objectives ([Appendix 1](#)) every four years and annually publish information ([Appendix 2](#)) demonstrating how it is meeting the aims of the public sector equality duty. Where there are school specific objectives, such objectives will be published for that individual school website.

3. Links with Other Policies or Legislation

This statement applies to every policy, procedure and guidance document that is produced in relation to students, staff, parents and Governors.

This statement is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010 (“the Equality Act”).

Other Trust policies which link to this statement are:

- SEN Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Admissions Policy
- All Employment Policies

4. Equality Statement

The Trust will ensure that equal opportunities and the principles of fairness underpin all aspects of policy, procedure, education provision, consultation and decision making.

The Trust is committed to equality in its delivery of education, whether or not the service is directly provided by us or contracted out to a third party provider.

The Trust aims to provide high quality education services, making sure services are easily accessible. We will improve what we do by continuing to consult with staff, students, parents and governors, their communities and partners about equalities issues. We will promote our equal opportunities policy in our contact with parents, staff, governors and external organisations.

We will make every effort in creating equality of opportunity in order to ensure they are accessible and fair to everyone. Every person has the right to be treated fairly, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, disability, age culture, religion, nationality or caring responsibilities.

Where necessary we will implement reasonable adjustments, or additional support, to ensure equality of access to an education and suitable working environment.

Our staff and governors who agree and deliver our education provision will recognise diversity and demonstrate a proactive approach in their day-to-day work. They will ensure that everyone is treated fairly, recognising special needs and understanding differences.

Behaviour will reach our high standards of conduct (staff and students) and the learning environment we provide will be safe and accessible for those studying and working.

The Trust will adhere to statutory Government legislation and give consideration to other relevant guidance, which aim to make sure that everyone is treated with equity.

The Trust will not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour against members of the academy/school community.

5. Employment

The Trust is committed to ensuring that employees have equal access to jobs, training, and professional development opportunities

All employment policies refer to the provisions of the Equality Act.

The Trust recognises that it has broader responsibilities to employees and situations that may be covered by the Act. For example, an employee with parental or caring responsibilities for a disabled dependent may have rights under the Act which the Academy would need to consider.

All recruitment will be undertaken with regard to the obligations set down by the Equality Act and applications will be monitored to report on recruitment activity, in line with the Act.

Employees who are in breach of this statement will be dealt with under the Trust disciplinary policy.

6. Student Provisions

The Trust and its member academies/schools will ensure that students are provided with appropriate support to recognise their individual needs. This includes protection under the Act extending the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled students.

All policies relating to the provision of education, the curriculum, behaviour for learning, attendance, exclusion, medical treatment and Child Protection and safeguarding policies should consider the provisions and duties of the Act.

The protected characteristic 'Age' does not apply to students in the academies/schools.

7. Contractors and Service Providers

The Trust will ensure that all service providers that are contracted to provide services to students, staff or visitors will comply with Equalities legislation.

Where services are deemed not to meet Trust standards, in relation to equal opportunities and fairness, contracts may be terminated.

The Trust Equalities Objectives

In setting our objectives for we are guided by the following 9 principles:

1. All learners are of equal value
2. Recognise and respect difference
3. Foster positive attitudes and relationships and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging
4. Observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development
5. Aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist
6. Consult and involve widely
7. Society as a whole should benefit
8. Base our practices on sound evidence
9. Measurable objectives

Objectives - Agreed and Published Sept 2023 *(to be reviewed annually and updated every 4 years (2027)).*

- We will ensure that having now taken responsibility for 3 special schools based in Bristol (Sept 2023), that we challenge recent findings about the experience of children and families from ethnic minorities in these schools, so that ethnic minority children are not over represented in the system and are treated respectfully.
- Children from ethnic minority groups will achieve at least as well as their peers and in-line with 'others' nationally.
- We will deliver responsive services and customer care that is accessible and inclusive to individual's needs and respects faith, beliefs and cultural differences
- Disadvantaged children will make progress in line with 'others' nationally at all key stages.
- Children with a special educational need or a disability, will make progress in line with 'others' nationally at all key stages.
- We will work to ensure that there is more equal representation of genders in each of the four quartiles of pay in the Trust.
- We will ensure that there are more people with protected characteristics on our Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies.
- We will ensure that all children and staff, no matter their sexual orientation, are treated fairly and supported.

In order to satisfy the public sector equality duty we have undertaken the following:

a) Eliminating discrimination:

- We have published clear policies relating to behaviour, bullying, recruitment and pay where the importance of avoiding discrimination and other prohibited conduct is expressly set out.
- Our Trust Board and LGB meetings discuss and reinforce equality duties.
- We have established a BAME working group
- We have adopted the BANES Race Charter across all our school
- We have supported staff training on equality issues.
- We have worked across schools to raise awareness of unconscious bias.
- We have engaged with external providers to support schools delivering key messages relating to discrimination – SARE for example
- We have surveyed children and acted on outcomes of survey to improve tolerance of all in our communities
- We have installed notices in a number of school toilet areas with contact numbers/email contact for organisations that support children facing prejudice.
- We will complete equalities impact assessments on projects where school roll is changing or a 'significant difference' application is benign made to the Regional Schools' Commissioner

b) Advancing equality of opportunity:

- We publish to Trustees and Governors achievement data showing how pupils with different characteristics are performing.
- We have published clear plans in the Trust and School Improvement Plans to show our focus on pupils with different characteristics.
- We collect data and adjust programmes where necessary, to ensure pupils with different characteristics can access educational visits and extra-curricular activities.
- We have provided post 16 students with bursaries to support their studies.

- The Trust provided over 2,500 electronic devices for use by children during the two-year lockdown disruption. Many of these devices remain with children to support their catch-up and learning. This programme operates after the pandemic.

c) **Fostering good relations**

- Our curriculum offer across all schools (published on websites), highlights a curriculum which promotes tolerance or understanding of others (e.g. religion, culture, race, etc.).
- We have robust anti-bullying policies.
- We use assemblies to focus on equality issues.
- All schools work with the local community or other schools to encourage appreciation of diversity.
- We have engaged with outside speakers to raise awareness of issues relating to discrimination.
- Specific days are used in schools to find out about the protected characteristics.

Annual report for 2023 on objectives set:

- **By the end of the school year, the percentage of boys in key stage 2 achieving age related expectation in writing will be at the national level at least for KS1 and KS2.**

Boys are now achieving above national levels for reading, writing and maths. In 2023 KS 2 SATS 78% of boys made ARE in reading compared to a national of 69%. 82% made ARE in maths compared to 72% nationally and 76% made ARE in writing compared to 63% nationally

Girls had similar outcomes to boys across all core areas at KS 2 in 2023. In Maths, boys outcomes were higher than those of girls. In reading and writing, boys were within 5% of girls for each measure. This is a considerable improvement over time since the objective was set.

- **By the end of the school year, progress for boys in English at GCSE will be Progress 8 (0) for the Trust.**

This was achieved in 2022 overall and again in 2023. In English, outcomes have improved for boys who are now at -0.1 compared to a national of -0.37 (2022). Girls do still out-perform boys but our gap between the two identified genders has fallen from 1 grade to under half a grade in English.

- **Disadvantaged children will make progress in line with 'others' nationally at all key stages.**

This was achieved across the Trust at Primary school and in the secondaries in 2022. In 2023, outcomes were relatively strong for disadvantaged children compared to the national scores once again. GCSE disadvantaged pupils had a progress 8 score of -0.11 compared to a national in 2022 of -0.6. Some individual schools still have a significant gap between the performance of disadvantaged children and 'others'.

- **Children with a special educational need or a disability, will make progress in line with 'others' nationally at all key stages.**

Progress scores at Primary schools show SEND children in-line with their peers. At secondary level, some schools have performed exceptionally well and SEND children. At secondary level SEND pupils had a 2023 P8 score of -0.3 which is below that of 2022, but still well above national for this group (-0.69 in 2022). Some schools perform well with this group and often outcomes that are below expectation are the result of pupil absence due to medical issues. With pupils who are absent due to medical issues removed, the P8 score for SEND is +0.1 for the Trust secondary schools.

- **We will work to ensure that there is more equal representation of genders in each of the four quartiles of pay in the Trust.**

There are significantly more female employees now in both the upper quartile and upper middle quartiles and male employees. The gender pay gap for the Trust has reduced by 5% over the last 4 academic years.

- **We will ensure that there are more people with protected characteristics on our Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies.**

The Trust Board has had ethnic minority representation on it in the recent past. There are a number of LGBS with members who would be part of a protected characteristic group. At LGB level there is an ethnic minority representation of 9% and a 15% representation of those that fall into a protected characteristic group.

- **We will ensure that all children and staff no matter their sexual orientation are treated fairly and supported.**

We are actively involved in a number of projects to raise awareness of the issues of sexual orientation. We have programmes in all schools via PSHE to ensure children are informed about protected characteristics and their role in

supporting integration and valuing people who may be different to themselves. We have taken a tough stance on homophobic, racist and all other prejudicial behaviours including when necessary, permanent exclusion from school. The rates of inappropriate behaviour and language in our schools is very low and reduced in previous years. There have been no complaints that have progressed beyond school level relating to prejudicial behaviours as schools resolve these effectively. We have had 16 ofsted inspections in 2023 and a MAT inspection and all were at least good or better with no issues found relating to prejudicial behaviours in our schools.

Some very pleasing progress has been made over the last 12-18 months on the objectives set. However, there is still further work to be done to ensure that the work undertaken by the Trust to satisfy the objectives is embedded in our every-day practice.