



Equality Information and Objectives Policy

April 2023

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1 Statement of Intent

The Aspire Schools Trust (the Trust) recognises that certain groups in society can be disadvantaged because of unlawful discrimination they may face due to their race, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, or pregnancy and maternity.

The Trust (and each of its schools) has a statutory duty to publish an Equality Information and Objectives Statement.

2 Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

This policy also has due regard for non-statutory guidance, including the following:

- DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act 2010 and schools'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Equality Information and Objectives Statement
- Admissions Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Flexible Working Policy
- Performance Management Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Appendix A)
- Staff Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Appendix B)

The Equality Act 2010 provides a modern, single legal framework with three broad duties:

- Eliminate discrimination harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

For the purpose of this policy, the Equality Act 2010 will be referred to as 'the Act'. The Trust fully understands the principles of the Act and the work needed to ensure that those with protected characteristics are not discriminated against and are given equal opportunities. Protected characteristics, under the Act, are as follows:

- Age
- Disability which includes mental health, encompassing prejudiced assumptions, attitudes or behaviours related to mental health.

- Race, colour, nationality or ethnicity
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Maternity and pregnancy
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- In relation to admissions.
- In the way it provides education for pupils.
- In the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service.
- By excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

The liability not to discriminate, harass or victimise does not end when a pupil has left their school within the Trust, but will apply to subsequent actions connected to the previous relationship between school and pupil, such as the provision of references on former pupils or access to former pupils' communications and activities.

The Trust will promote equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants and will work in line with the Staff Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

3 Roles and responsibilities

Trustees/Local Governing Body committee members will:

- Ensure that the Trust (and its schools) complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations, and with discrimination law.
- Meet the obligations under the PSED to:
 - Publish equality objectives at least every four years commencing on the date of the last publication.
 - Update and publish information every year to demonstrate compliance with the PSED.
- Ensure that the Trust's policies and procedures are developed and implemented with appropriate equality impact assessments informing future plans.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure pupils and potential pupils will not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised in relation to:

- Admissions.
- The way the school provides and education for pupils.
- How pupils are provided with access to benefits, facilities and services.
- The exclusion of a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.
- Ensure equal opportunities in its staff recruitment and promotion practices, professional development programmes and in membership of the governing board.
- Monitoring the composition of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability.
- Proactively recruit high-quality applicants from under-represented groups.
- Provide information in appropriate and accessible formats.
- Ensure that the necessary disciplinary measures are in place to enforce this policy.

Chief Executive Officer will:

- Be responsible for the review and amendment of this policy, taking into account new legislation and government guidance, and previously reported incidents, in order to improve procedures.
- Reviewing and update employment practices and procedures where necessary to ensure fairness and to take account of changes in the law.

Headteachers will:

- Implement and champion this policy and its procedures.
- Ensure that all staff members receive the appropriate equality and diversity training as required.
- Ensure that all parents, visitors and contractors are aware of, and comply with, the provisions of this policy.
- Ensure that appropriate counselling is made available for pupils who require immediate interventions, parental assistance and personal counselling.
- Actively challenge and take appropriate action in any case of discriminatory practice.
- Address any reported incidents of harassment or bullying in line with DfE guidance.
- Take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of staff with different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities, in line with the school's Flexible Working Policy.
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff.
- Ensure staff are helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the school.
- Making staff progression decisions based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act 2010).
- Produce an annual report on the progress of implementing the provisions of this policy and report it to their local governing board.

Members of staff will:

- Be alert to the possible harassment of pupils, both inside and outside of the school, and to deal with incidents of harassment and/or discrimination as the highest priority.
- Have due regard to the sensitivities of all pupils, and not provide material that may cause offence.
- Conduct themselves in a manner that provides equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.
- Understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against their colleagues, customers, suppliers, visitors and the public.
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by their colleagues, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the school's work activities.
- Track and monitor any instances of discrimination amongst pupils and deal with these in a consistent manner, making a report to the headteacher as necessary.
- Identify and challenge bias and stereotyping within the curriculum and the school's culture.
- Promote equality and good relations, and not harass or discriminate in any way.
- Monitor pupils' progress and needs to ensure the appropriate support is in place.
- Keep up-to-date with equality legislation and its application by attending the appropriate training.
- Act as a role model for equality, diversity and inclusion across the whole school community.

Pupils will:

- Not discriminate or harass any other pupil or staff member.
- Actively encourage equality and diversity in the school by contributing their cultural experiences and values.
- Report any incidences of bullying or harassment, whether to themselves or to others, to a member of staff.
- Abide by all the Trust's equality and diversity policies, procedures and codes.
- Each school will have an equality page on its website, in order to demonstrate how it is complying with the PSED in the Equality Act 2010, and advancing equality of opportunity.

4 Equality Objectives

The Trust is committed to promoting the welfare and equality of all its staff, pupils and other members of the school community.

The Trust sees all members of the school community as of equal value, regardless of any protected characteristic. The Trust's policies, procedures and activities will not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences in life experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barriers and disadvantages which people may face in relation to any protected characteristic.

Each school's Equality Information and Objectives Statement sets out how the school is meeting the PSED and outlines how equality of opportunity is ensured for all members of the school community. The Equality Information and Objectives Statement is reviewed at least every four years and is published on the school website annually.

Each school will consult with stakeholders to establish equality objectives and draw up an individual school plan based on information collected on protected groups and accessibility planning.

Each school will regularly review the steps being taken and the progress made towards the achievement of these objectives and, in line with the specific duties of the PSED.

5 Collecting and using information

In accordance with the requirements outlined in the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, personal data will be lawfully collected and processed in line with the principles and practices outlined in the Data Protection Policy and only for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, e.g. to comply with the school's legal obligations.

The Trust will collect equality information for the purpose of:

- Identifying key issues, e.g. unlawful discrimination in teaching methods.
- Assessing performance, e.g. benchmarking against similar organisations locally or nationally.
- Taking action, e.g. adapting working practice to accommodate the needs of staff who share protected characteristics.

The Trust will build an equality profile for staff to assist with identifying any issues within their recruitment regime. The Trust will obtain the following information from their staff:

- Recruitment and promotion
- Numbers of part-time and full-time staff
- Pay and remuneration
- Training
- Return to work of staff members on parental leave
- Return to work of disabled employees following sick leave relating to their disabilities

- Appraisals
- Grievances (including about harassment)
- Disciplinary action (including for harassment)
- Dismissals and other reasons for leaving

The Trust will use the information it obtains to analyse any gaps present in its equality documentary, including the information found in Appendix A - Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Appendix B - Staff Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

6 Publishing Information

The Trust (and each of its schools) will publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the Act. Information will be published relating to people within the school community who share relevant protected characteristics, including:

- The school's employees.
- People affected by the school's policies and procedures.

This information will not be provided if:

- The employee is employed under contract personally to do work.
- The employer does not have this information, and it is not reasonably practicable for the employer to obtain the data.

Should the Trust employ over 250 employees then it will also publish the following information annually with regard to the gender pay gap:

- The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male and female full-pay relevant employees
- The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male and female full-pay relevant employees
- The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to male and female employees
- The difference between the median bonus pay paid to male and female employees
- The proportions of male and female relevant employees who were paid bonus pay
- The proportions of male and female full-pay relevant employees in lower, lower middle, upper middle, and upper quartile pay bands

The above information will be updated and published annually on the Trust/school website in a manner that is accessible to all its employees and to the public for a period of at least three years from the publication date, usually in the form of an annual report.

7 Promoting Equality

Please refer to Appendix A - Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Appendix B - Staff Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion guidance which sets out the Trust's approach to promoting equality and diversity across the whole school community.

8 Staff Training

Staff will receive the appropriate equalities training that will:

- Focus on staff specialisms in relation to equality, for example, a focus on homophobic bullying to address a planned approach towards inclusion.
- Ensure all staff are aware of, and comply with, current equalities legislation and government recommendations.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and how they can support pupils with protected characteristics.
- Provide support for teachers to effectively manage any discrimination towards pupils with protected characteristics.
- Provide up-to-date information on the terms, concepts and current understandings relating to each of the protected characteristics.
- Develop appropriate strategies for communication between parents, educators and pupils about any issues related to a protected characteristic.
- Ensure that schools are aware of, and participate in, relevant awareness days, such as Black History Month, World Disability Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, Pride, and International Women's Day.

9 Addressing prejudice-related incidents

The Trust is opposed to all forms of prejudice. Each school will ensure that pupils and staff are aware of the impact of prejudice. The school will address any incidents immediately and, where appropriate, report them in line with DfE guidance.

Any reports of bullying and prejudice will be carefully monitored and dealt with accordingly. Training will be given to all staff to ensure that they are aware of the process for reporting and following up incidents of prejudice-related bullying.

10 Complaints procedure

Any person, including a member of the public, is able to make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that is provided within Aspire Schools Trust. Please contact the school office for details of the complaints policy.

Schools work to develop good professional relationships between colleagues; however, the school understands that sometimes conflicts may arise. Through maintaining open communication, the Trust wants its employees to feel able to raise any grievances so that appropriate and effective solutions can be put in place. Grievances raised by staff members will be processed in accordance with the AST Grievance Policy.

11 Monitoring and Review

The Chief Executive Officer will review this policy annually, to ensure that all procedures are up-to-date.

Each Headteacher and their school's Local Governing Body will monitor and evaluate the following on an annual basis:

- Individual attainment data
- Equal opportunities recruitment data
- Equality impact assessments
- Ofsted inspection judgements on equality and diversity
- Incident records related to harassment and bullying

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Appendix A – Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Under the Equality Act 2010, all schools have a duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality between different groups.
- Foster good relations between different groups.
- Promote mental health and wellbeing.

The Trust's overall values are underpinned by our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Trust is dedicated to ensuring that every pupil receives an education that offers them the best chance at fulfilling their potential, and to promoting mental wellbeing amongst our pupils. We are committed to supporting and celebrating all pupils' individual identities.

To achieve our aims, each of our schools will adopt the following methods:

- Embedding equality within teaching and resources
- Using key data indicators to understand the needs and characteristics of their school
- Promoting community cohesion
- Promoting parental engagement
- Investing in regular staff training
- Using key data, such as measures of wellbeing, to monitor the progress of pupils with protected characteristics
- Regularly reviews to reflect on current trends and issues

In addition to the documents outlined on page 2 of this policy, Appendix A also has due regard to statutory and good practice guidance, including but not limited to:

- DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act and schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children'
- DfE (2018) 'Gender separation in mixed schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Equality Act 2010: advice for schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'

Protected Characteristics

Our schools will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic related to a person, such as a parent, with whom the pupil or prospective pupil is associated.

Our schools will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic which they are believed to have, even if the belief is mistaken.

Our schools will not discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil (or prospective pupil), because of their:

- **Sex**

For the purpose of this guidance, sex refers a pupil's biological assignment at birth depending on their reproductive organs. We understand some pupils identify as a gender different to the one they were assigned at birth, and school will support pupils through their transitioning phases.

Pupils of one sex are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to pupils of other sexes.

School will only separate pupils by sex where there is reasonable justification for doing so, or if one of the following applies:

- Pupils will suffer a disadvantage connected to their sex
- One sex has needs that are different from the needs of the other sex
- Participation in an activity by pupils of one sex is disproportionately low

School will consider non-statutory exceptions on a case-by-case basis, and regularly review the impact of any separation to ascertain whether it remains lawful.

Pupils will be offered equal opportunities to undertake any activity in the school, e.g. in relation to technology lessons, all pupils will be allowed to choose which skills they learn.

There may be occasions where school deem it necessary to teach some subjects in single-sex classes, but we will ensure that such classes do not give pupils a disadvantage when compared to pupils of the other sex in other classes. Occasions where pupils are separated to be taught in single-sex classes will be documented and the separation justified to ensure parents, Ofsted and, where necessary, the wider community can understand the reasons behind separation. Where a subject is taught in a single-sex class, trans pupils will be allowed to attend the single-sex class that corresponds with the gender they identify with.

Pupils' age and stage of development will be taken into consideration before segregating sports teams. Both sexes will have equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities; where separation is deemed necessary, the single-sex sports teams will receive the same quality and amount of resources.

- **Race or ethnicity**

Pupils of all races and ethnicities are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils, each school will regularly review their school practices to ensure that they are fair.

Pupils with EAL are treated equally and fairly, while ensuring they are supported at all times.

Pupils will not be segregated on the basis of their race or ethnicity, understanding that claims of 'separate but equal' will not be tolerated, and that such actions will always be viewed as direct discrimination.

Schools may, however, take positive action, e.g. organising open days for pupils and families of a specific race that is under-represented, to address the particular challenges affecting pupils of one racial or ethnic group, where this can be shown to be a proportionate way of dealing with such issues.

- **Disability (which includes mental health, encompassing prejudiced assumptions, attitudes or behaviours related to mental health)**

Pupils with disabilities are not singled out or treated less favourably than other pupils simply because they have a disability, which includes any mental health issue. Regular reviews of school practices will be undertaken by the Headteacher to ensure they are fair.

Implementing rules that could have an adverse effect on pupils with disabilities (e.g. by making physical fitness a basis for admission, or asking all pupils to deliver a presentation, as this could be unfair towards pupils with anxiety) will be avoided, unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

Schools will ensure that pupils with disabilities are not discriminated against because of something which is a consequence of their disability (for example, by not allowing a pupil on crutches outside at break time because it would take too long for them to get in and out), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

Schools will make any reasonable adjustments, and provide any auxiliary aids, necessary to ensure the full inclusion of pupils with disabilities, especially where the pupil also has SEND but does not have a SEND statement or EHC plan.

Schools will meet our duty to undertake accessibility planning for pupils with disabilities and ensure that an Accessibility Plan is implemented and reviewed where necessary.

Please refer to each school's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for pupils with SEND.

- **Religion and belief**

Pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because of their religion or belief.

Regular reviews of school practices will be undertaken by the Headteacher to ensure they are fair.

Pupils are provided with the appropriate space in which they can practice their faith, e.g. to perform their daily prayers.

Absences in relation to religious observances will be handled in accordance with the school's Attendance Policy.

School's will liaise with local religious leaders of all faiths to inform the amount of leave pupils will be granted in relation to religious observance.

- **Sexual orientation**

Gay, lesbian and bisexual pupils, or the children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents, are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

Regular reviews of school practices will be undertaken by the Headteacher to ensure they are fair.

Pupils are taught about the nature of marriage, including same-sex marriage, by presenting the facts of English and Welsh law – teachers will not offer personal opinions when discussing marriage in RSHE. Pupils will be educated on positive relationships, families and gender identities within the LGBTQ+ community. RSHE lessons will be taught in accordance with the Relationships and Sex Education Policy.

Religious beliefs with regards to sexual orientation are taught to pupils in an educational context, in a manner that is not prejudicial or discriminatory.

Support is available to LGBTQ+ pupils to feel comfortable and ensure they can celebrate their identity.

A designated safe space within our school where pupils can discuss issues of sexual orientation without fear of discrimination is available.

- **Gender reassignment**

Pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably in relation to gender reassignment, i.e. because they are trans or have trans parents, siblings or other family members. Regular reviews of school practices will be undertaken by the Headteacher to ensure they are fair. Schools recognise that gender reassignment does not necessarily involve physical change, and can be solely social and emotional.

Reasonable adjustments to accommodate absence requests for treatment and support of trans pupils by external sources (e.g. charities such as Stonewall) can be made. Any such absences will be recorded accurately and sensitively by the SENCO to ensure the privacy of the pupil.

Pupils have the right to dress in accordance with their true gender identity within the constraints of their school's dress code, outlined in the School Uniform Policy.

Suitable toilet and changing facilities for pupils to use, including:

- Unisex/gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities.
- Gender-specific toilets and changing facilities.
- Private changing facilities.

The facilities will be made available to all pupils and pupils can use the facility they feel most comfortable in, e.g. if a trans pupil wished to use a private changing room.

Trans pupils will be supported to feel comfortable and ensure they can celebrate their identity.

A designated safe space within our school where trans pupils can discuss issues of gender without fear of discrimination is available.

- **Pregnancy and maternity**

Pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they become pregnant, have recently given birth, have children or are breastfeeding.

Reasonable adjustments to accommodate absence requests for the treatment and support of pupils who are pregnant, or have just given birth, will be made.

Looked After Children

LAC and previously LAC (PLAC) will be given the highest priority for admissions, as per the requirements of the Admissions Policy.

Pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are looked after, or have previously been looked after, by the state.

A personal education plan will be created and implemented for all LAC and PLAC, to ensure that their education and development needs are fully covered, including appropriate transition and catch-up support to ensure that they do not fall behind.

Any SEND that LAC or PLAC have are duly taken into account and addressed, whether this is with or without a SEND statement or EHC plan.

The curriculum

Pupils should be exposed to thoughts and ideas of all kinds, however challenging or controversial, and will not make any unjustified changes to our curriculum content on the grounds of any protected characteristics that a pupil may have. Schools will ensure, however, that the curriculum is as balanced as possible, and delivered in such a way that prevents discrimination and the promotion of prejudicial stereotypes.

Equality, diversity and acceptance are taught and promoted throughout each subject area, for example discussion of stereotypes, cultures and difference may be undertaken in lessons. The observation of inclusive teaching strategies is a key aspect of school's annual programme of monitoring.

Schools will respect the right of parents to withdraw their child from sex education.

Promoting Inclusion

Schools will promote inclusion and equality through:

- Ensuring that pupils are called by their preferred names, which may be different from their legal names, taking into account the correct spelling, structure and pronunciation.
- Ensuring, as far as possible, that their local governing board and staff reflect the full diversity of their local community.
- Providing an environment where prejudiced assumptions, attitudes and behaviours are continually challenged.
- Instilling in pupils an awareness of prejudice, giving them confidence that it can, and must, be eradicated.
- Providing a variety of educational and residential visits that expose pupils to a wide range of cultural experiences.

- Ensuring equal access to opportunities, such as extracurricular activities and the curriculum.
- Taking care in the use of language and the choice of resources, so that teaching and non-teaching staff avoid reinforcing stereotypical views of society.
- Valuing the cultural experiences and contributions of all pupils, regardless of any protected characteristic that they may have.
- Communicating this policy to parents to gain their understanding, agreement and support for its provisions.
- Discussing equality issues as an agenda item for the school council.
- Promoting equality of opportunity within the wider society.
- Ensuring admission arrangements will not unfairly disadvantage a pupil from a particular social or racial group, or with SEND.

Pupils that have left school

The responsibility to not discriminate, harass or victimise does not end when a pupil has left school. It will continue to apply with regard to subsequent actions related to the school's previous relationship with the pupil, such as the provision of references.

Bullying and discrimination

The Anti-bullying Policy will be used in conjunction with this policy in order to prevent, and effectively deal with, any discriminatory incidents relating to pupils.

Incidents of a child protection or safeguarding nature will be reported, recorded and dealt with in line with the process in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

It is the responsibility of the headteacher of each school to decide whether it is appropriate to notify social services and/or the police of any incident.

Concerns with regards to the handling of bullying and discrimination incidents relating to pupils will be dealt with via the procedures outlined in the Complaints Policy for the pupil's school.

Appendix B – Staff Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Aspire Schools Trust is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit. The Trust is committed to supporting our staff and applicants to be their authentic selves in the workplace without judgement and ensuring that diverse communities are celebrated.

The Trust does not discriminate against staff on the basis of age, disability, gender identity and/or reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation (the protected characteristics), amended in line with the Equality Act 2010. The definitions below are based on the Equality Act 2010, the full text of which is available [here](#).

- **Age:** The Act protects people of all ages; however, differential treatment because of age is not unlawful direct or indirect discrimination if it can be justified, i.e. if you can demonstrate that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Age is the only protected characteristic that allows employers to justify direct discrimination.
- **Disability:** The Act protects people who are disabled; the Act defines this as someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **Gender identity and/or reassignment:** The Act protects transgender people. The Act no longer requires a person to be under medical supervision to be protected, so a person who does not undergo any medical procedures would be covered by these protections.
- **Marriage and civil partnership:** The Act protects people who are married or in a civil partnership against discrimination. Single people are not protected.
- **Pregnancy and maternity:** The Act protects people against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of their pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which they are entitled.
- **Race:** The Act protects people of all races; the Act's definition of race includes colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins.
- **Religion or belief:** The Act protects people of any religion, including specific denominations or sects, as well as a lack of religion, i.e. employees or jobseekers who do not follow a certain religion or do not follow any religion are protected. The Act protects people of any belief; this is defined as any religious or philosophical belief, or a lack of such belief, that is a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.
- **Sex:** The Act protects men and women.
- **Sexual orientation:** The Act protects lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual staff.

We are also mindful of intersecting identities within our school environment and the Trust will work with our communities to better understand the experience of multiple minority identities for individuals.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this guidance and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status. The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat pupils, parents, governors, third party organisations and former staff members.

The Equality Information and Objectives Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades (collectively referred to as staff). Staff including members of the SLT, teachers, TAs, learning mentors, support staff, trainees, home workers, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers, interns, casual workers, and agency staff.

Underlying principles

In accordance with this policy, the Trust commits to:

- Creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
- Promoting dignity and respect for all.
- Training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under this policy.

This policy applies to all aspects of the Trust's relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

Instances of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination will be dealt with as misconduct, in line with the Trust's Grievance Policy and/or Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. Harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

Forms of discrimination

Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not “fit in” would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

Recruitment and Selection

The Trust will aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics. The Trust's recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it is relevant to the job and not disproportionate. The shortlisting of applicants will be done by more than one person wherever possible.

Job advertisements will avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. The Trust will take steps to ensure that vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which will only be used with central HR's approval, such as:

- Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
- Positive action to recruit disabled persons.
- Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

The Trust is required by law to ensure that all staff are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, will be expected to produce original documents, e.g. a passport, before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, the Trust will monitor applicants' ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information will be voluntary and will not adversely affect an applicant's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information will be removed from applications before the shortlisting process, and will be kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps the school take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

Staff training and promotion and conditions of service

Staff training needs and associated development opportunities will be identified through regular staff appraisals, in line with the Performance Management Policy for staff. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made based on merit. The Trust will adopt good practice in terms of data collection and use this data to monitor and measure the attraction, recruitment, retention and progression of staff.

Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

Conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they equal opportunities for all.

Termination of Employment

The Trust will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

The Trust will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action, in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Disability discrimination

The Trust encourages staff who are disabled or become disabled to inform their headteacher or their line manager about their condition so that they can be supported appropriately.

Staff experiencing difficulties at work because of their disability (physical or otherwise) may wish to contact their line manager or Central HR to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help

overcome or minimise the difficulty. Their line manager or Central HR may wish to consult with the staff member and a medical adviser about possible adjustments.

The local governing board for each school within the Trust will monitor the physical environment of their school premises to consider whether certain features place physically disabled staff, job applicants, service users, or other stakeholders at a substantial disadvantage compared to others. Where reasonable, the school will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

Part-time, zero hours, and fixed-term employees and agency workers

The Trust monitors the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. Schools will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under the Flexible Working Policy.

The Trust monitors its use of zero hours and fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. The Trust will, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

Breaches of this policy

If a member of staff believes that they may have been discriminated against, they are encouraged to raise the matter through the AST Grievance Policy. If they believe that they may have been subject to harassment, they are encouraged to raise the matter with their line manager and/or Headteacher.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under the AST Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Trust takes a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.