

# Equality and Diversity Policy incorporating Equality Information and Objectives Statement



ADVANTAGE  
S C H O O L S

**Approved by:** Trust Board

**Date:** 4 December 2019

**Last reviewed on:** 4 December 2019

**Next review due by:** December 2023

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## 1. Introduction

This policy applies to all staff working at or for Advantage Schools, and all those involved in governance, and affects all people who work, attend visit or communicate with Advantage Schools or its stakeholders in any way.

## 2. Policy Statement

1. Advantage Schools recognises that discrimination and victimisation is unacceptable and that it is in the interests of the Trust and its employees to utilise the skills of the total workforce. It is the aim of the Trust to ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment on grounds of age, disability, gender/gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation (the protected characteristics).

2. Our aim is that our workforce will be representative of all sections of society and each employee feels respected, able to give of their best and recognised for their contribution.

3. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or victimisation. To that end the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our care, including those in our employment, and to ensure that we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

4. All employees, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

5. Our staff will not discriminate directly or indirectly with regard to pupils, families, visitors, contractors or anyone the Trust works with in any form because of protected characteristics in the provision of the Trust's services.

6. Our trust serves a diverse community and hence we recognise that pupils are likely to have higher aspirations if they experience a diverse range of role models who excel in their roles.

7. This policy and the associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, full account will be taken of any guidance or Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, any Government Departments, and any other statutory bodies.

## 3. Our commitment

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff are recognised and valued.
- Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- Training, development and progression opportunities are available regardless of protected characteristics.
- To promote equality in the workplace which we believe is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- To ensure that all staff are trained on equality and diversity, and that this is refreshed at least every three years or when there are significant adjustments to the policy and/or objectives.
- Whenever we review all our employment practices and procedures, we will ensure fairness. This will occur annually.
- Breaches of our equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- This policy is fully supported by senior management and the Trust Board.
- The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Trust Board.

## 4. Responsibilities of management

Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation and operation of this policy and the arrangements will rest with the **Chief Executive Officer**.

The **Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** of the schools within the Trust will ensure that they and their staff operate within this policy and arrangements, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination.

Each **Principal** will ensure that:

- all their staff are aware of the policy and the arrangements, and the reasons for the policy;
- grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly and as quickly as possible;
- employment and performance management processes are reviewed annually to ensure they do not discriminate against individuals because of protected characteristics;
- appropriate reasonable adjustments are made to allow colleagues to continue to be productive regardless of protected characteristics (for example but not limited to, breastfeeding spaces, reasonable breaks, adjustments to working patterns, direct support of senior staff, cover); and
- proper records are maintained.

The **Chief Operating Officer** will be responsible for monitoring the operation of the policy in respect of employees and job applicants, including periodic school and/or departmental audits, and the provision of training opportunities.

## 5. Responsibilities of staff

Responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination rests with all staff and the attitudes of staff are crucial to the successful operation of fair employment practices.

In particular, **all members of staff** should:

- participate fully in the Trust training programme;
- comply with the policy and arrangements;
- not discriminate in their day to day activities or induce others to do so;
- not victimise, harass or intimidate other staff, pupils or groups, while explicitly recognising the potential for unconscious bias against those with protected characteristics;
- ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic; and
- inform their manager and/or SLT if they become aware of any discriminatory practice and abide by the Advantage Schools whistleblowing policy.

## 6. Third Parties

Third-party harassment occurs where a Trust employee is harassed, and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties such as carers or pupils.

Advantage Schools will not tolerate such actions against its staff, and the employee concerned should inform their line manager and/or SLT at once that this has occurred.

Advantage Schools will fully investigate and take all reasonable steps to ensure such harassment does not happen again.

## 7. Related policies and arrangements

All employment policies and arrangements have a bearing on equality of opportunity.

The Trust policies will be reviewed regularly by the Trust board or committees of the Trust.

Recommendations will be sought and closer scrutiny will be invited by the Trustee who is responsible for overseeing Equality and Diversity.

## 8. Rights of disabled people

The Trust attaches particular importance to the needs of disabled people.

Under the terms of this policy, **managers** are required to:

- make reasonable adjustments to maintain the services of an employee or provide for a pupil who becomes disabled, for example, training, provision of special equipment, reduced working hours. (NB: managers are expected to seek advice and guidance from external agencies to maintain disabled people in employment or include a pupil who is disabled);
- include disabled people in training/development programmes; and
- give full and proper consideration to disabled people who apply for jobs, including continuing to support the right to interview for disabled people who meet the person specification, and having regard to making reasonable adjustments for their particular aptitudes and abilities to allow them to be able to do the job.

The Trust does not seek out information that may unintentionally prejudice outcomes of applications for employment or other such decisions. For example, the Trust does not ask about health and attendance information in its applications for references for prospective employees.

## 9. Equality Training

Regular briefing sessions will be held for staff on equality issues. These will be repeated as necessary to ensure staff are fully equipped to maintain an environment that promotes equality and celebrates diversity. Equality information is also included in induction programmes. Training will be provided for SLT on this policy and the associated arrangements. All managers who have an involvement in the recruitment and selection process will receive specialist training.

## 10. Monitoring

- The Trust deems it appropriate to state its intention not to discriminate and will take every reasonable step to ensure that it is translated into practice consistently across the organisation as a whole. Accordingly, a monitoring system will be used to measure the effectiveness of the policy and arrangements and report back to the Trust board annually.
- The system will involve the routine collection and analysis of information on employees by gender, marital status, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion / beliefs, grade and length of service in current grade. Information regarding the number of staff who declare themselves as disabled will also be held and reported.
- The Trust Board will appoint from one of its number as an Equalities and Diversity Trustee to monitor and support with this work.
- There will also be regular assessments to measure the extent to which recruitment to first appointment, internal promotion and access to training/development opportunities affect equal opportunities for all groups. This will be reported by the Chief Operating Officer back to the Trust board as part of this monitoring.
- We will maintain information on staff who have been involved in certain key policies: Disciplinary, Grievance and Bullying & Harassment.
- Where appropriate equality impact assessments will be carried out on the results of monitoring to ascertain the effect of the Trust's policies and our services may have on those who experience them. By March 2020, The Chief Operating Officer will identify the policies and areas to be assessed, and this assessment will be carried out by July 2020.
- The information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose than to monitor and drive improvements in policy and practice.
- If monitoring shows that the Trust, or areas within it, are not representative, or that sections of our workforce are not progressing properly within the Trust, then an action plan will be developed by the Chief Operating Officer to address these issues.

This will include a review of recruitment and selection procedures, and Trust policies and practices. The Trust will always employ the person best suited for the role while ensuring that we address unconscious bias and attract a wide pool of high quality candidates.

Annually, the Trust will undertake monitoring of the visible representation of pupils and staff with protected characteristics on our website, in newsletters, in work displays where they exist, with our rewards, participation in visits, participation in extracurricular activities and in our recruitment to positions of responsibility (eg student leadership, staff promotions).

## **11. Grievances/Discipline**

Employees have a right to pursue a complaint concerning discrimination or victimisation via the Trust's Grievance Procedures. Discrimination and victimisation will be treated as disciplinary offences and they will be dealt with under the Trust Disciplinary Procedure.

## **12. Review**

The effectiveness of this policy and associated arrangements will be considered annually by the Trust Board. The policy and equality information and objectives statement will be reviewed and updated at least every four years.

## **Appendix A – Equality Information and Objectives Statement**

Advantage Schools is committed to promoting Equality and celebrating Diversity.

We aim to enable pupils and staff to reach their full potential and provide them with a productive purposeful working and learning environment free from discrimination.

Advantage Schools values the unique contribution that individuals bring with their experiences, knowledge and skills enriching our schools.

We are committed to being a model employer for all employees.

We want to make sure our school and employment practices respect, promote and celebrate differences, including age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In carrying out our functions, the Advantage Schools will ensure we follow the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) by having due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

To make sure we promote equality and diversity we will set a number of Equality Objectives, and review our policies to ensure there is no unjustifiable adverse impact on our pupils or staff.

As with all of our procedures, we aim to be a model for how a School Trust should operate, with the utmost ethical standards.

### **Equality Objectives for 2019-2023**

1. To ensure leadership is committed to excellent (“significantly above average”) outcomes for all pupils, explicitly including those that attract the pupil premium and those with protected characteristics.
2. To ensure strengthened and appropriate provision for pupils who have English as an Additional Language and ensure these pupils achieve excellent outcomes.
3. To continue to ensure that no pupil is excluded from an activity or opportunity because of their characteristics or ability to pay.
4. To strengthen Governance, leadership and performance management to eliminate all discrimination, including ‘unconscious’ discrimination, while ensuring continued compliance with the law, including but not limited to:
  - a. ‘blind’ shortlisting of all applications for employment and governance
  - b. robust moderation of performance management decisions
  - c. an explicit commitment to search for the best possible candidates, including exploring opportunities to advertise to candidates who may not access some of the traditional routes of identifying roles they may be suitable for.
5. To introduce more comprehensive Equality monitoring data by improving data collection processes and using the data more intelligently to inform trust priorities.
6. To undertake an analysis of recruitment data and trends with regard to race, gender and disability, and report on this to the Finance, Audit and Resources Committee of the Trust Board.
7. To ensure all members of staff and governors involved in recruitment are fully aware of their responsibilities with regard to equal opportunities and non-discrimination.
8. To have in place a reasonable adjustment agreement for all staff with disabilities, to better meet their needs and ensure any disadvantages they experience are addressed.
9. The Trust will develop a Disability Passport by July 2020.

10. To monitor all practices to ensure those with protected characteristics are treated fairly, including but not limited to reporting to the trust board the data, and the actions resulting from the data on:

- a. trends with regard to characteristics of pupils that migrate through each school.
- b. trends with regard to characteristics of pupils that have been excluded and of those who have had behavioural incidents and rewards in each school.
- c. trends with regard to admissions into each school
- d. trends with regard to destinations from each school
- e. trends with regard to participation (eg extra-curricular activities) at each school
- f. trends with regard to attendance at each school

10. To ensure tangible aspects of the wider curriculum embrace and promote differences, including but not limited to those covered by protected characteristics, and ensuring acceptance.

11. Appoint an Equalities and Diversity Trustee.