

Excel Learning Trust

Equalities Policy

Approved Date:	November 2024
Version:	3.0
Review Timetable:	3 years
Renewal Date:	November 2027

1.1 STATEMENT OF INTENT

Excel Learning Trust's (ELT) equalities policy covers all those with protected characteristics, in order to ensure that they are not discriminated against and are given equality of opportunity. This includes:

- Age (for employees, not for service provision)
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Gender (including issues of transgender and gender re-assignment)
- Maternity and pregnancy
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

1.2 All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status. The Trust has zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment of any kind. 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.

1.3 This policy covers ELT staff working at all levels, as well as trustees, governors, trainees, volunteers, casual workers and agency staff (collectively referred to as 'staff' in this policy). This policy also covers pupils who attend our schools.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

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

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023

2.2 This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

For Pupils

- Accessibility Plan
- SEND Policy
- SEND Report

For Staff

- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Staff Appraisal Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Leave of Absence Policy

2.3 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

3 DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 This document sets out how the Trust and its schools comply with the duties places upon them by the Equalities Act 2010. For the purpose of this policy the Equality Act 2010 will be referred to as ‘the Act’.
- 3.2 The Trust welcomes its duties under the Act and aims to promote respect for difference and diversity in accordance with our values of excellence and a sharp focus on outcomes, people and character, improvement through collaboration and community and inclusivity.
- 3.3 The Trust is aware of its duty to:
- Publish equality information in order to demonstrate compliance with the Act.
 - Uphold and publish equality objectives.
 - Prepare, monitor and implement an accessibility plan.
 - Ensure that all other Trust and school policies fully reflect the aims, duties and responsibilities of this equalities policy.
 - Ensure that all School Improvement Plans take full account of the aims, duties and responsibilities of this Equalities Policy
- 3.4 The Trust Board has overall responsibility for this policy, however they will delegate the operational responsibility for implementing this policy and monitoring the achievement of the objectives to the Trust’s Executive and Leadership Teams.
- 3.5 All schools in our Trust remain inclusive organisations that welcome pupils, staff, parents, governors and visitors from all walks of life and all protected characteristics.
- 3.6 All our schools understand their duty to encourage activities that promote all elements of community cohesion.
- 3.7 All Trust staff are expected to have regard to this document and to work to achieve the objectives as set out in section 8

4. ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION

- 4.1 The Trust is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and complies with non-discrimination provisions.
- 4.2 The Trust requires its schools to put in place and to organise a range of activities and opportunities that promote the elimination of discrimination and other conduct

that is prohibited by the Act. This will include strategies such as:

For Pupils

- Age-appropriate assemblies on the theme of discrimination
- A behaviour policy which will not tolerate any behaviour that is derogatory towards any other person, for any reason whatsoever
- An anti-bullying policy which explicitly states that discriminatory behaviour towards any individual or group will not be tolerated and will be taken extremely seriously
- A system for recording and reporting any discriminatory incidents, so that leaders can monitor how effective the school is in eliminating discrimination - this includes, but is not limited to, incidents of a racist or homophobic nature
- Pastoral staff whose remit includes working proactively where discrimination is identified or suspected
- Topics within relevant curriculum areas (e.g. RE, PSHCE, and History) that explore in an age appropriate context issues relating to discrimination

For Staff

- A Staff Code of Conduct which will not tolerate any behaviour that is derogatory towards any other person, for any reason whatsoever
- Systems for recording and reporting any discriminatory behaviours or incidents, and a robust approach to dealing with issues or discrimination or harassment
- Regular reviews of Trust policy and procedure to ensure they are free from direct and indirect discrimination

4.3 Trustees and Governors strive to achieve a diverse composition of their various governing bodies, in order to best reflect the school's local community.

4.4 When recruiting staff, the Trust will seek to make appointments that reflect the diversity of the local community.

4.5 When promoting staff within any of its schools or the Trust, decisions will be made without prejudice related to any of the protected characteristics.

5. ADVANCING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

5.1 The Trust aims to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. This will include strategies such as:

For Pupils

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people that 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, making provision for specific dietary needs linked to religious belief or medical need)
- 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 clubs)
- Each school ensures that data analysis of pupil performance considers and addresses gaps between pupils with a protected characteristic and those who do not share it. Given the size of cohorts within the Trust, however, caution is taken when analysing and drawing conclusions based on the performance of extremely small groups of pupils
- The Trust's admissions policy states that pupils with a disability (i.e. an EHCP) are given priority in allocating places at its schools
- Transition for those pupils with a disability is also given a high priority, with additional opportunities for staff to exchange information, attend relevant meetings and to prepare pupils for their journey to a new setting
- Support for those pupils with EAL needs is given through each school's provision for those with SEND
- Each school within the Trust has a dedicated SENCO, whose remit is to support pupils with disabilities and their families, including liaising with and working alongside external professionals as appropriate

For Staff

- When recruiting new staff, the Trust will monitor several protected characteristics for job applications, to ensure that there is equality of opportunity in relation to gender, age, disability and ethnicity.
- Equality monitoring during the recruitment process is handled in a way that ensures sensitive information relating to any of the protected characteristics is removed prior to the shortlisting process and thus cannot be viewed by any of those involved in the selection of candidates.

6. FOSTERING GOOD RELATIONS

6.1 The Trust aims to foster good relations across all characteristics i.e. between

people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. This will include strategies such as:

For Pupils

- Promoting tolerance, friendship and understanding of a range of religions and cultures through different aspects of our curriculum. This includes teaching in RE, citizenship and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, but also activities in other curriculum areas. For example, as part of teaching and learning in English/reading, pupils will be introduced to literature from a range of cultures
- Each school's ethos seeks to promote tolerance, understanding and fairness to all
- 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
- The behaviour policies in the Trust's schools aim to reward pupils who consistently uphold the school's values and ethos, in particular in relation to demonstrating attitudes of mutual respect.
- Both secondary schools take part in annual York Pride celebrations and ensure that their homophobic policies are a key aspect of managing pupil attitudes and behaviour.
- Both secondary schools have Stonewall Champion status and the primary schools draw upon Stonewall information in seeking to maintain positive relations with parents and families. Our schools seek to recognise and support all families, including:
 - Families with same-sex parents
 - Families with step-parents
 - Families with one parent
 - Families who have adopted a child
 - Families where other relations are the child's carer
- As part of PSHCE work, pupils are taught about the range of different family organisations that are welcomed and valued within our school communities.
- Schools will draw upon a range of activities that help to provide specific opportunities for the fostering of good relationships. These include:
 - Foreign exchange visits
 - Trips abroad
 - Trips beyond the City of York
 - Focus weeks (on a cultural theme or a specific country)

- Visitors from the local community (e.g. local faith group leaders) and visitors from abroad
- Classroom materials and reading books with multi-ethnic content

For Staff

- Encouraging opportunities for cross-Trust collaborative working between all categories of staff, including opportunities for informal networking and specific working groups
- Having a suite of HR policies which are clear that the Trust has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination and harassment

7. THE TRUST'S 5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

7.1 The Trust has agreed a set of guiding principles, which inform the work of each school as well as the Trust itself:

1. All learners are of equal value
2. We recognise and respect differences
3. We foster positive attitudes and a sense of belonging
4. We are an equalities employer in all aspects of what we do
5. We seek to reduce and remove barriers to equality

7.2 In keeping with these guiding principles, we respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

7.3 In order to ensure that our staff are well equipped to meet the needs of all our stakeholders, we ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

8. CURRENT OBJECTIVES

8.1 The Trust's current objectives are to:

Objective 1: To undertake an annual analysis of recruitment data and trends with regard to protected characteristics and social mobility data and report on this to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

Why we have chosen this objective: The Trust recognises the importance and benefits of having an inclusive and diverse workforce which reflects the local communities of their schools. This analysis will also feed into, and inform the gender pay gap report analysis.

Progress we are making towards this objective: The Trust has a centralised recruitment service which allows the collection of protection characteristic information. Two years' worth of equality data has been presented to the committee which has been scrutinised and challenged and which has led to social mobility data also being collected, and which will be reported upon in the next cycle.

Objective 2: To close gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils; especially those eligible for Pupil Premium, with special educational needs and disabilities, looked after children and disadvantaged children.

Why we have chosen this objective: The Trust does not believe that children and young people's educational outcomes should be determined by disadvantage; be it special educational needs, disability or the economic circumstances of their parents. The Trust is committed to reducing attainment gaps in these cohorts of pupils.

Progress we are making towards this objective: Our schools are working in partnership with disadvantaged families to build stronger relationships. Pupil data is monitored to understand how pupil cohorts are progressing and shared with and scrutinised by governors and trustees. The Trust has developed a promise to vulnerable children and their families which we are working towards as part of our strategic objectives 2024-2027. We have also introduced emotion coaching and adaptive teaching.

Objective 3: To train members of staff, governors and trustees involved in recruitment and selection on equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

Why we have chosen this objective: The Trust is committed to ensuring their recruitment processes are consistent, fair, transparent and non-discriminatory.

Progress we are making towards this objective: Our trustees and governors have received unconscious bias training.

9. BREACHES OF THE TRUST'S EQUALITIES POLICY

- 9.1 Any breaches of this policy will be handled in the same way as breaches to any other policy. Complaints in relation to pupils will be processed using the Trust's Complaints Policy. Any reports of breaches by staff will be handled through the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure at the appropriate level.

10. MONITORING

- 10.1 We collect, study and use quantitative and qualitative data relating to the implementation of this policy, and make adjustments as appropriate.
- 10.2 The Trust will update the equality information we publish at least annually.