



**SYNERGY
EDUCATION
TRUST**

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

2024-2028

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Created by:	Lisa Tupman
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Statement of intent

Synergy Education Trust is committed to providing equal opportunities in both employment and when providing education to children and young people. The Trust is opposed to all forms of discrimination in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 and as defined by the Equality Act 2010, whether direct, perceived, indirect or by association. This policy outlines the Trust Board's vision and objectives for equality, diversity and inclusion across Synergy Education Trust.

Our objectives include fair opportunities for all pupils and staff eliminating discrimination and fostering an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity. We are committed to regularly reviewing and improving our practices to uphold these principles.

1. Legal Duties

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). For schools and Trusts, this means that it is unlawful to discriminate against individuals or treat them less favourably because of their sex; race; age; disability; religion or belief; gender reassignment; sexual orientation; pregnancy or maternity.

Public Sector Equality Duty

As an Multi Academy Trust, we are also required by the Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Act to take positive steps to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.

In line with its specific duties under the Equality Act 2010, we will publish our equality objectives and will publish information about how it is complying

with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Objectives will be updated every four years.

2. Roles and responsibilities

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for approval of all Trust employment policies and will do so following the relevant persons within the Trust having consulted where appropriate colleagues and Trade Unions on the content of the policy. Trustees are responsible for ensuring the Trust complies with the anti-discrimination provisions of the Equality Act 2010, including as an employer; compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010; and compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The CEO has overall responsibility to ensure that there is equality of treatments across the Trust in all aspects of the organisation and business.

Senior Leadership Team

Senior Leadership Teams will ensure that this policy is implemented within their academies. This will include:

- making sure measurable steps are taken to address the Trust's stated equality objectives, integrated with other strategic priorities;
- making sure Governors, employees, pupils, students and their parents and carers are aware of equality issues, as relevant;
- making sure all employees know their responsibilities and receive training and support in carrying these out (as appropriate);
- taking appropriate action in cases of harassment and discrimination, including identity-related incidents; and
- enabling reasonable adjustments to be made, in relation to disability, in regard to pupils, employees, parents / carers and visitors to the Trust / Academy.

Trust Central Team

The Trust central team will provide advice and guidance to Trust leaders, Headteachers, Senior Leaders and employees regarding the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. The central team will support leaders with training requirements. The central team with support from the Trust's external HR provider will advise and guide senior leaders where evidence of a potential breach of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is found, to determine whether disciplinary or other formal action should commence in line with the appropriate Trust Policy.

Employees

All employees will comply with this policy and are responsible for:

- avoiding unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- promoting equality of opportunity in their work;
- fostering good relations between groups;
- dealing with identity-related incidents, whether or not they amount to bullying;
- taking up relevant professional development opportunities.

Employees found to be in breach of any aspect of this policy, displaying actions or conduct which is in breach of the equality provisions and ethos may be subject to disciplinary action under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.

3. Aims

The Trust endeavours to create a strong, sustainable and cohesive community in our academies and across the Trust. The Trust will continue to develop and promote policies and systems to ensure that our pupils, students, employees and anyone associated with our Trust are not unlawfully discriminated against and that we encourage a commitment to equality, diversity and fair treatment of all.

Everyone who works or applies to work at the Trust will be treated fairly and equally and this principle will apply to recruitment and selection, job/task allocation, promotion, secondment, training, appraisal, discipline and grievance and all terms and conditions of employment.

Independent contractors and service providers are encouraged to apply the Trust's Equality and Diversity Policy within their own area of practice.

The Trust commits to encouraging equality and diversity in the workplace and equal opportunities for all. The Trust will wherever possible take positive steps to redress any under-representation of ethnic groups. The Trust is also committed to educating all staff through professional development opportunities and staff communications of equality and diversity issues.

The Trust will promote equality and diversity through an inclusive curriculum. Discrimination will be robustly challenged in all areas of the curriculum. Curriculum planning will take account of the needs of all pupils/students and will cover issues of equality and diversity.

The Trust also commits to creating and maintaining a working environment free of bullying, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all and an environment where individual differences and contributions of all employees are recognised and valued.

Where discrimination against any person or group is referred to in this policy, it shall mean;

4. Equality Definitions and Terms of Discrimination

Discrimination is treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction towards, a person based on the group, class, or category to which the person is perceived to belong. These include all of the nine protected characteristics as well as other categories / groups / definitions that a person may be perceived to belong.

Direct Discrimination

This is where a person is treated less favourably or more favourably than others would be on grounds that are not justifiable, such as race, gender, disability or any other protected characteristic or perceived group to which the person belongs.

Indirect Discrimination

This consists of treatment, which appears to be fair and applied to everyone equally but has an unjustifiable impact upon a particular group of people or particular group of people with a protected characteristic.

Institutional Discrimination

Is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an effective and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin, nationality, religion/belief, gender, disability, sexuality, age or other status or protected characteristic. It can be seen or detected in process, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination. Through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which disadvantages people.

Association Discrimination

Association discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive Discrimination

Perceptive discrimination occurs when a person directly discriminates against another person because the person thinks they possess a particular protected characteristic. This applies even if the person being discriminated against does not have the protected characteristic.

Racism

Racism is the belief in the superiority of one race over another, which often results in discrimination and prejudice towards people based on their race or ethnicity.

Racism can also occur where false assumptions are held regarding people from ethnic backgrounds.

Institutional racism occurs when people from different ethnic backgrounds are disadvantaged in some way within an institution. This is often subtle and underlying rather than openly stated and applied.

Disability Discrimination

This will be deemed to have occurred where all reasonable possibilities which would enable the retention of a person with a disability have not been explored. This could include modifications to equipment, the use of

special employment aids, job restructuring or redeployment where appropriate.

Victimisation

This is unlawful and occurs where a person is treated less favourably because they have asserted their rights under the Equality Act or would not be considered for a post because they have made a claim at an Employment Tribunal for example.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Genuine Occupational Requirement

Occasionally the Trust may wish to specify that they wish to appoint to a particular protected characteristic or group, for example a male or female employee relevant to the requirements of the job role. Such situations are lawful if they demonstrate that there is a genuine occupational requirement with regard to the nature or context of the work i.e.:

- a) it is an occupational requirement,
- b) the application of the requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, and;
- c) the person to whom a) applies, the requirement does not meet it or the Trust has reasonable grounds for not being satisfied that the person meets it.

5. Statutory Obligations

In formulating new or amending existing policies, practices, strategic plans, service plans and in employment and service development; the Trust will take account of its responsibility within the following statutory obligations:

- Equality Act 2010
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 (amendment 2018)
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations

6. Training

Any training and development needs, particularly statutory and mandatory training required for employees will be arranged by the appropriate manager or senior leader in conjunction with the Central team. All staff will receive equality, diversity and inclusion training as part of their induction and at regular intervals thereafter, to ensure that staff understand what is expected of them during their employment and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.

Training records of all completed staff training will be maintained by the school/academy.

7. Student equality

The achievement of all students is monitored by race, gender and disability and we use this data to support students, raise standards and ensure inclusive teaching. The Trust will tackle discrimination by the positive promotion of equality, challenging bullying and stereotypes and creating an environment which champions respect for all.

We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn within the Trust.

Curriculum delivery

The way in which the curriculum is delivered is covered by the Act so the Trust will ensure issues are taught in a way that does not subject students to discrimination. In addition, what is taught in the curriculum is crucial to tackling key inequalities for students including gender stereotyping, preventing bullying and raising attainment for certain groups. From September 2020 RSE.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

Identity-based bullying

The Trust has legal duties to students in relation to bullying and will ensure that all bullying is treated on the grounds of a protected characteristic with the same emphasis as any other form of bullying.

Academy uniform

The Trust will ensure that academy uniform policies do not discriminate against students with a protected characteristic and they will not have the effect of unlawfully discriminating against students with a protected characteristic and to comply with equality duties. Exceptions will be made to standard policies for certain students while ensuring that setting different rules for different categories is not discriminatory.

Work experience/placements

Students will be given the same opportunities for work experience and placements and assumptions will not be made about what would suit students with particular protected characteristics.

Assessments and exams

Reasonable adjustments will be made for students who are entitled to these. These adjustments are granted by the STA (Key Stage 2) and JCQ (Key Stage 4) and can only be put in place should they be agreed.

Religion

The Equality Act does not require the Trust to provide opportunities for separate worship for the different religions and beliefs represented among students. The Trust supports ceremonies and festivals celebrating any faith, such as Christmas, Diwali, Chanukah or Eid, without being subject to claims of religious discrimination against children of other religions or of none. In England and Wales parents can remove their children from collective worship.

Behaviour

The Trust expects all students to take responsibility and behave in accordance with this policy respecting the principles of the policy in their

practices and dealings with the school community; and in a way that reflects and appreciates the diversity of the school community.

8. Equality Information

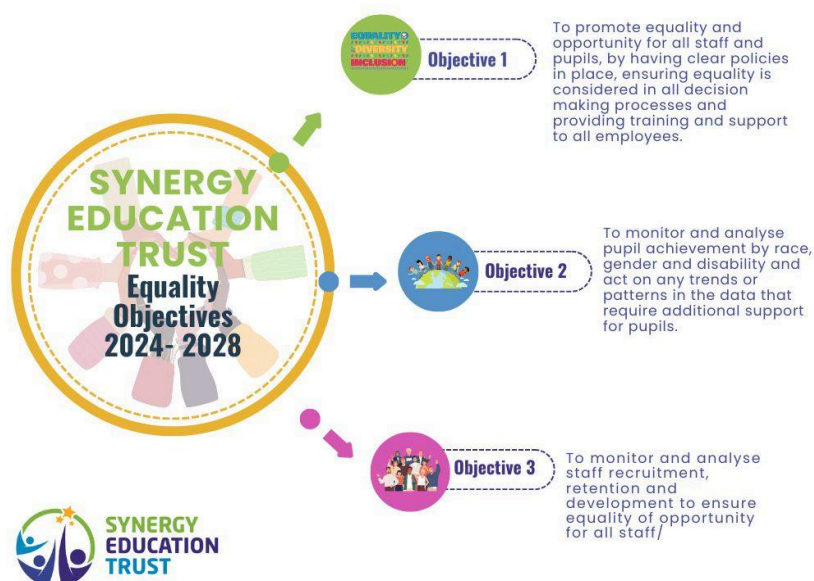
The Trust may gather and analyse information on pupils, students, employees and others including those with declared protected characteristics who are affected by Trust policies and practices. The purpose of analysing this information is to ensure that the Trust is furthering the three aims of the public sector equality duty. This information will include local and national data as well as Trust data including surveys, complaints, focus groups, interviews and pupil voice.

9. Conclusion

The Trust will endeavour to uphold the aims of this policy and is committed to ensuring equality and fairness in treatment across the organisation. The Trust will do everything in its power to create a transparent and equitable environment for all.

The Trust will annually consider and review how our workforce reflects diversity and where possible take actions to address any shortfalls.

10. Synergy Education Trust Equality Objectives



11. Contact Information

Employees may contact their trade union representative for further advice and support regarding discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Employees are also encouraged to speak to their line manager and / or the Central Team should an issue relating to discrimination, harassment or victimisation occur.

In addition, further information for advice and support can be found at:

Equality and Human Rights Commission

0808 800 0082

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Citizens Advice Bureau

03444 111 444

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Civil Legal Advice (CLA)

0345 345 4 345

<https://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice>

Trust Central Team

01253 800318

admin@seteducation.org.uk