



Equality and Diversity Policy including Equality Objectives and reference to Accessibility Plans

1. Introduction

Ad Astra Academy Trust recognises and embraces the fact that everyone within our school community is unique. We seek to ensure that everyone reaches their full potential and as such we believe that everyone has the right to equality of opportunity. We seek to ensure that this philosophy permeates every aspect of school life.

Ad Astra Academy Trust Equality and Diversity Policy brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including the Equality Objectives 2017-20 (Appendix A). It includes all the protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010 as well as other aspects which have the potential to discriminate against or to devalue any individuals within the trust's community.

The trust and its schools are committed to its duties under the Equality Act 2010, specifically the principle of equal opportunities for all students, staff and members of each school's community (including parents/carers, visitors and partner agencies). The trust and its schools are committed to the development of cohesive communities both within each school's physical boundaries and within local, national and global environments. The trust and its schools embrace the aim of working together with others to improve children's educational and wellbeing outcomes, and notes the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Equality and Diversity Policy is underpinned by:

- The Trust's Equality Objectives (Appendix A)
- Each school's Accessibility Plan (Example enclosed Appendix B)

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out how practice and policies within the trust and its schools have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between groups.

The purpose is to ensure that the culture in school is one where every member of the Academy Trust family feels safe and secure in the knowledge that discrimination in any form will not be tolerated and will be challenged at every level. We will seek to ensure that no one will experience discrimination as a result of;

- Sex
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity

These are known as 'protected characteristics' as highlighted in the Equality Act 2010. However at Ad Astra Academy Trust we also believe that because of the deprived characteristics of some of our local communities and consequently the challenging circumstances that many of our children face, we will also

ensure that no one will experience discrimination due to their socio-economic background or family circumstances.

3. Overall aims and principles

The overall aims of this policy are:

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- To promote equality of access and opportunity within each school and its community.
- To promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, genders, sexual orientation, cultures, faiths, abilities and ethnic origins.
- To ensure that equality and inclusive practice are embedded across all aspects of school life the Equality and Diversity Policy refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes recognition of a range of educational, wellbeing, and material outcomes.

The overall principles of this policy are that:

- We will continue to embrace and celebrate our strong inclusion culture.
- We will actively promote the philosophy that everyone in life is equal.
- Through positive educational experiences we aim to promote positive social attitudes and respect for all.
- Discrimination in any form will not be tolerated and positive action will be taken to address it.
- All pupils will have equal access to the full range of educational opportunities provided by the school.
- We will ensure that all recruitment, employment, promotion and training opportunities are conducted fairly.
- Prejudice and stereotypical views and opinions will be challenged at all times.
- Diversity will be celebrated.
- We will consult and involve stakeholders in the development of equality policies to ensure accountability and transparency.
- Inequality and barriers to equality are identified and reduced.

These principles apply to all school stakeholders including children, parents, staff, governors, volunteers and visitors. Indeed, anyone associated with the Academy Trust is expected to adhere to the principles outlined above.

4. Legislation

Our commitment to equality is reinforced by our duty to comply with equality legislation.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all previous equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act. The Equality Act 2010 provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It has simplified the law by removing anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time in existing legislation and extended the protection from discrimination in certain areas.

Whilst we are bound by our legislative duty, we also believe that it is our moral duty and purpose to ensure that our equality philosophy forms an integral part of our academic, pastoral, leadership and management functions that form the foundations of our Trust.

Ad Astra Academy Trust welcomes any other legislation or amendment to existing legislation that seeks to further reinforce the duty of equality of opportunity for all.

The Equality Act also introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and Academies and which extends to all protected characteristics. This duty has three main elements;

In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required 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.

What having 'due regard' means in practice has been defined in case law and means giving relevant and proportionate consideration to the duty. For Ad Astra Academy Trust this means;

- Anyone who is responsible for making decisions in school must be aware of the duty to have 'due regard' when making a decision or taking an action and must assess whether it may have implications for people with protected characteristics.
- Equality implications must be considered before and at the time that policies are developed and not as an afterthought. They need to be kept under review on a continuing basis.
- The PSED has to be integrated into the carrying out of our functions and the analysis necessary to comply with the duty has to be carried out seriously, rigorously and with an open mind. It is not just a question of 'ticking boxes' or following a particular process.

We cannot delegate the responsibility for carrying out our duty to anyone else.

5. Code of Practice

The trust and each school will publicise the following guidelines for staff and pupils to promote the Equality and Diversity Policy:

- Staff and pupils are expected to respect all persons as individuals and to honour their rights;
- Staff and pupils should behave in such a way as will promote a safe and secure environment free from unfair discrimination or harassment;
- Staff and pupils should not be prepared to tolerate unfair discrimination or harassment of others.

6. Implementation

We will ensure implementation of this policy through action in the following areas;

- **Relationships and ethos**

To foster behaviour based on rights, responsibilities and mutual respect between all members of the school community, to support pupils' personal development and well-being, to address all forms of prejudice related bullying.

- **Equity and excellence**

To ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest possible level possible, removing barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities and minimising variations in outcomes for different groups.

- **Teaching, learning and curriculum**

To teach pupils to understand others, to promote common values and value diversity, to promote awareness of human rights and of the responsibility to uphold and defend them, and to develop the skills of participation and responsible action.

- **Engagement and extended services**

To provide a means for children, young people and their families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations, including links with different school communities locally, across the country and internationally.

7. Approach

7.1 Pupils

- Each school is committed to the principle of equal opportunities for all pupils.
- No pupil will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexuality, disability, trade union activity, political or religious beliefs
- In particular the school will ensure equal treatment for pupils in these areas:

- o Admission

- o Attainment, progress and assessment

- o Reporting

- o Curriculum, teaching and Learning

- o Personal Development

- o Achievement

- o Behaviour and Discipline

7.2 Staff

- The trust and each school is committed to the principle of equal opportunities for all staff.
- No job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexuality, disability, trade union activity, political or religious beliefs nor be disadvantaged by any conditions or requirements of employment that cannot be justified.
- In particular the trust and each school will ensure equal treatment for staff in the following areas:

- o Recruitment Selection

- o Training

- o Promotion

- o Appraisal

7.3 Community

- Each school in the trust is committed to the principle of equal opportunities for all members of its community, including parents/carers.
- No community member will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexuality, disability, trade union activity, political or religious beliefs

o In particular the school will ensure equal treatment for community members in the following areas:

o Membership of the local governing body;

o Involving parents and carers and the local community in the school;

o Selection of suppliers of goods and services.

8. Monitoring, Review and Impact Assessment

This policy will be regularly reviewed by staff, governors and Trustees to ensure that it is effective in tackling discrimination, promoting access and participation and equality between different groups. All Trust and individual school policies will be impact assessed on a rolling programme to ensure that they meet our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone who is associated with Ad Astra Academy Trust is responsible for promoting equality and inclusion and tackling discrimination.

9.1 Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the trust and its schools meet the commitments in this policy.

9.2 Headteacher

Each school Headteacher will:

- ensure that staff, parents/carers, pupils/students, governors, visitors and contractors are aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities;
- oversee the effective implementation of the policy;
- ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement the policy;
- ensure that the Senior Leadership team is kept up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it.

Headteachers are responsible for;

- Producing regular information for staff and governors about the policy and how it is working and providing training as necessary.
- Ensuring that all staff know their responsibilities in terms of equality and receive support in implementing them.
- Taking timely and appropriate action in the event of any form of discrimination or harassment.

9.3 Local Governing Body

Our governors are responsible for;

- Following the school policy by demonstrating this in their own behaviour.
- Ensuring that the school complies with all current equality legislation.

Each school's Local Governing Body will:

- ensure that this policy and its commitments are implemented within the school;
- support the Headteacher in implementing any actions necessary;
- evaluate and review the policy on a regular basis.

9.4 Senior Leadership Team

Each school's Leadership Team will:

- support other staff in implementing this Policy;
- with the Headteacher provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues;
- assist in implementing reviews of this policy.

9.5 Pupils

Pupils will

- act in accordance with the policy;
- be encouraged to actively support the policy.

All of our pupils are responsible for;

- Treating each other kindly and fairly, without prejudice, discrimination or harassment.
- Attending and engaging in their own learning and helping other pupils to learn.
- Telling staff about any discrimination related incidents that happen.

9.6 Staff (including voluntary staff)

Staff will:

- be fully aware of the policy and how it relates to them;
- understand that this is a whole school issue and support the policy;
- make known any queries or training requirements.

All staff are responsible for;

- Proactively following the policy and any associated guidelines.
- Providing role models for pupils through their own actions.
- Dealing with discriminatory incidents and recognising and tackling other forms of bias and stereotyping.
- Promoting equality and good community relations and avoiding discrimination against anyone for reasons of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or socio-economic circumstances.
- Keeping up to date in relation to the equality duty in school and attending training or other learning opportunities provided.

9.7 Community members

Members of the community, including parents/carers will:

- have access to the Policy through a range of different media appropriate to their requirements
- be encouraged to actively support the Policy
- be informed of any incident related to this Policy which could directly affect their child.

- be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy.

9.8 All Parents

All of our parents are responsible for;

- Supporting the school in its implementation of this policy.
- Following the Trust policy by demonstrating this in their own behaviour.
- Ensuring their children attend school and engage in learning.
- Telling staff about any discrimination related incidents that occur.

9.9 Visitors

All visitors to our school are responsible for;

- Being aware and following our equality policy.
- Following the school policy by demonstrating this in their own behaviour.

10. Overall Responsibility for Overseeing Equality Practices

Responsibility for overseeing equality practices lies ultimately with the Trustees however this is supported by Headteachers of each school within the Trust and the Academy Head of Operations. Specific responsibilities include;

- Coordinating and monitoring work on equality issues.
- Dealing with and monitoring reports of discriminatory behaviour.
- Monitoring the progress and attainment of identified vulnerable groups of children.
- Monitoring attendance and inclusion.

11. Breaches of this Policy

Any breaches of this policy will be dealt with as part of the normal complaints or grievance procedures as is the case with breaches of any school policy. Anyone wishing to make a complaint or grievance will be advised accordingly.

12. Grievance and Complaints

12.1 Staff

Any employee who considers that he or she is suffering from unequal treatment may raise a complaint through the agreed procedure for dealing with grievances included in the Trust Grievance Policy.

12.2 Community members

Any parent or carer who considers that he or she is suffering from unequal treatment may raise a complaint through the trust Complaints Policy.

12.3 Prejudice-based incidents

All prejudice-based incidents should be reported using the locally approved normal incident report system. In addition, the staff member responsible for resolving the incident must complete the school's Incident Report Form and pass it to the Headteacher or in the case the incident refers to the Headteacher the Chair of Governors.

13. References to other Documents, Advice and Guidance

In monitoring this policy, advice and guidance will be sought from Local Authority officers where appropriate as well as sourcing advice from external bodies including the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Department for Education and OfSTED.

14. Accessibility Plan

Ad Astra Academy Trust is committed to providing a fully accessible environment which values and includes all students, staff, parents and other stakeholders regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs. We are committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.

The Trust will ensure each school's accessibility plan (Example enclosed as Appendix B) will cover the three main strands of the planning duty;

- To increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- To improve the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- To improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils

Summer 2017

To be reviewed Autumn 2010

APPENDIX ONE

Ad Astra Academy Trust Equality Objectives

The Trust's Equality Objectives for the period 2017 – 2020 are:

Objective 1 – To ensure that the individual needs of all learners are met, so that the gap in the attainment and progress of different groups of learners is narrowed, with a particular focus on improving the achievement of pupils entitled to Free School Meals and pupils with Special Educational Needs.

Objective 2 – To develop and implement a broad and balanced curriculum in each school (including extra curriculum and enrichment activities), which is based on the principles of individualisation and personalisation, and underpinned by innovative and appropriate use of IT, so that the attainment, aspirations and future employability of all pupils are maximised.

Objective 3 – To maximise the inclusion of learners with Special Educational Needs within the mainstream school provision, in order to build their confidence as learners, promote independence and raise self-esteem.

Objective 4 – To value and support all staff within the trust, by becoming the #employerofchoice and providing career development and progression opportunities to all (including those in groups protected by the Equalities Act), so that staff performance is further enhanced, staff satisfaction increases and the staff team reflects the diversity of the local population at all levels.

Objective 5 – To strengthen links with parents/carers and the local community (including those in groups protected by the Equalities Act and those from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds), so that all learners are supported to maximise their attainment and achieve their aspirations both inside and outside the school environment.

APPENDIX TWO

Please see below an example Accessibility Plan which should be replaced by each school's individualised version alongside this policy.

Target	Action	Success Criteria	Timescale	Responsible Person
To ensure that all Academy Trust school buildings are accessible to all pupils.	Conduct an audit of all premises to identify specific issues. Identify if any existing or prospective pupils have specific needs.	All Academy Trust buildings will be fully accessible for all pupils.	End of Spring term 2016	Academy Head of Operations
To improve access to the school grounds	Ensure that a winter gritting plan is in place. Check that all pathways are clear and safe. Investigate a suitable disabled parking provision for visitors.	Paths are accessible and safe. Improved access for users of the school.	Gritting plan implementation to be in place by Winter season 2015. Parking provision investigation – end of spring term 2016	Academy Head of Operations/ School site staff
To ensure venues and destinations for educational visits are suitable and accessible for all pupils	Staff to undertake research prior to the visit to ensure suitability including transport and other support services such as toilet facilities.	All educational visits are accessible for all pupils and allow them to take part fully in the visit.	Ongoing requirement.	All staff and the EVC
To ensure that all children can access the curriculum by embedding differentiated teaching strategies.	School leadership teams and SENDco to assess accessibility to the curriculum through school self-evaluation activities and data analysis and challenge teaching staff accordingly.	All SEN children will be able to access the curriculum effectively	To commence academic year 2015/16	Leadership teams
To increase awareness of the equality duty among all academy staff	To include equality information and responsibilities in the staff handbook.	Staff have an increased awareness of equality responsibilities	End of summer term 2015/16	Academy Head of Operations
To ensure that all disabled and SEN children can access learning materials in a format that ensures they can access the curriculum	School SENDco's to audit their SEN register to ensure all children can access curriculum materials	All pupils will have equal access to the curriculum	End of autumn term 2015	SENDco's