

Equality Policy

This policy has been approved by Directors and the Operations Board

Date Policy was created **September 2017**.....

Date of next renewal: **September 2020**.....

Skills for Life Trust is an inclusive Trust where we focus on the well-being and progress of every student and where all members of our community are of equal worth. We believe that the Equality Act provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups. We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Our approach to equality is based on the following 7 key principles:

1. All learners are of equal value whether or not they are disabled, whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background and whatever their sexual orientation.
2. We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength. We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face, in relation to disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, belief or faith and sexual orientation. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
3. We foster positive attitudes and relationships. We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.
4. We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of our school community to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community and to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully in school life.
5. We observe good equalities practice for our staff. We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.
6. We have the highest expectations of all our pupils. We expect that all pupils can make good progress and achieve to their highest potential.
7. We work to raise standards for all students, but especially for the most vulnerable. We believe that improving the quality of education for the most vulnerable groups of pupils raises standards across the whole school.

Purpose of the Policy

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). This means that schools cannot discriminate against pupils or treat them less favourably because of their sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy or maternity. Age and marriage

and civil partnership are also “protected characteristics” under the Equality Act 2010 but are not part of the school provisions related to pupils. The Act requires all public organisations, including schools to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and two specific duties.

The Public Sector Equality Duty or “general duty” requires all public organisations, including schools to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

Two “specific duties” require all public organisations, including schools, to:

1. Publish information to show compliance with the Equality duty
2. Publish Equality objectives at least every 4 years which are specific and measurable

This policy describes how Skills for Life Trust is meeting these statutory duties and is in line with national guidance. It includes information about how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and also provides guidance to staff and outside visitors about our approach to promoting equality.

Appendix 1 is a checklist of key equality considerations

Development of the policy

When developing the policy we took account of the DfE guidance on the Equality Act 2010 and also the Ofsted inspection framework, which places a strong focus on improving the learning and progress of different groups and on closing gaps in standards. We will share the draft policy through parent contact and staff consultation to ensure that the viewpoints of stakeholders are considered. This policy will require Trust Board/Operational Board approval.

Links to other policies and documentation

Although this policy is the key document for information about our approach to equalities in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, information is included in our school development plan, self-evaluation review, the school prospectus, Academy web site and other communications.

There are also links in the Behaviour, Admissions, SEN and Anti-Bullying Policies as well as minutes of meetings involving Trustees, the whole staff, and the senior leadership team and school council.

The Equality Act also applies to schools in their role as employers, and the way we comply with this are found in our Recruitment Policy.

What we are doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions and exclusions; the way we provide education for our pupils and the way we provide access to facilities and services.
- We are aware of the “Reasonable Adjustment” duty for disabled pupils – designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled pupils and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.

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- The Head of School ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities.
 - We seek the opinion of those who are affected by a policy or activity in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones.
 - We take seriously the need to consider the equality implications when we develop, adapt and review any policy or procedure and whenever we make significant decisions about the day-to-day life of the school.
 - We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and by creating an environment which champions respect for all.
 - Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not discriminate against pupils by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

Behaviour, Exclusions and Attendance

The Skills for Life Trust policies relating to Behaviour, Exclusions and Attendance take full account of the new duties under the Equality Act. We make reasonable, appropriate and flexible adjustment for pupils with a disability. We closely monitor data on exclusions and absence for evidence of over-representation of different groups and take action promptly to address concerns.

Addressing prejudice and prejudice based bullying

Skills for Life Trust challenges all forms of prejudice and prejudice-based bullying, which stand in the way of fulfilling our commitment to inclusion and equality. These include but are not limited to:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs.
- prejudices around race, religion or belief, for example anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.
- prejudices around travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum.
- prejudices around gender and sexual orientation, including homophobic and transphobic attitudes.

We treat all bullying incidents seriously. We keep a record of different prejudice-related incidents and provide a report to the Governors and Operational Board about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our school and how we dealt with them. We review this data regularly and take action to reduce incidents. We treat bullying of staff seriously.

What we are doing to advance equality of opportunity between different groups

- We know the needs of our school population very well and collect and analyse data in order to inform our planning and identify targets to achieve improvements.
- We have procedures, working in partnership with parents and guardians, to identify children who have a disability through our student admissions meetings.
- We collect data and monitor progress and outcomes of different groups of pupils and use this data to support school improvement. We take action to close any gaps, for example, for those making slow progress in acquiring age-appropriate literacy and numeracy skills.

We collect, analyse and share data on:

- Academy population by gender and ethnicity.
- % of pupils identified as having a special educational need and/or disability and by their principal need or disability.
- by year group – in terms of ethnicity, gender and proficiency in English.
- inequalities of outcome and participation, related to ethnicity, gender and disability and proficiency in English.

We publish an analysis of standards reached by different groups at the end of each key stage, including but not limited to:

- Free School Meals/Pupil Premium
- EAL
- All SEN; children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and those supported at the school on the SEN register (K coded)
- Looked after Children and Post looked after Children
- Children in other designated vulnerable groups

We also collect, analyse and use data in relation to attendance and exclusions of different groups.

- We avoid language that runs the risk of placing a ceiling on any pupils' achievement or that seeks to define their potential as learners, such as "less able".
- We use a range of teaching strategies that ensures we meet the needs of all pupils.
- We provide support to pupils at risk of under-achieving.
- We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality.
- In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between, for example:
 - disabled and non-disabled people
 - people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- We also aim to increase the extent to which pupils with disability can participate in the curriculum, improve the physical environment and improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.
- We ensure equality of access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.

Positive Action

We will take positive and proportionate action to address the disadvantage faced by particular groups of pupils with particular protected characteristics, such as targeted support. The actions will be designed to meet the Skills for Life Trust Equality Objectives.

What we are doing to foster good relations

- We prepare our students for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our students.
- We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination across the curriculum.
- We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability, avoiding stereotyping.
- We promote a whole school ethos and values that challenge prejudice based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour.
- We provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures e.g. through the whole school assembly programme, multi-cultural celebrations, black history month focus and current affairs programmes.
- We include the contribution of different cultures to world history and that promote positive images of people.
- We provide opportunities for pupils to listen to a range of opinions and empathise with different experiences e.g. via school council, form time debates, assemblies.
- We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, visitors, and whole school events.

Other ways we address equality issues

In order to ensure that the work we are doing on equalities meets the needs of the whole school community we:

- review relevant feedback from the parent questionnaires, parents' evening, PTFA forum and/or focus meetings or Governors parent-consultation meeting.
- secure and analyse responses from staff surveys, staff meetings and training events.
- review feedback and responses from the children and groups of children, from a variety of means including the school council, lessons, whole school surveys on children's attitudes to self and school e.g. student well being survey.
- analyse issues raised in Annual Reviews, In School Reviews or reviews of progress on Student Passports/Personalised Provision Maps, mentoring and support.
- ensure that we secure responses and feedback at Governors meetings.

Publishing Equality Objectives

The objectives which we identify represent our school's priorities and are the outcome of a careful review of and analysis of data and other evidence. They also take into account

national and local priorities and issues. We evaluate our success in meeting the Public Service Equality.

Duties by the extent to which we achieve improved outcomes for the different groups. We produce Equality data Analysis which inform our discussions about the Equality Objectives.

Our Equality Objectives are

- Achieve a year on year (over three years) reduction in the attainment gap in English and mathematics in all Key stages 3/4 pupils with a SEN/D statement and their peers
- Achieve a year on year (over three years) reduction in the % of fixed term exclusions for pupils with protected characteristics

Monitoring and reviewing objectives

We review and update our equality objectives every two years and report annually to the Trust Board/Operational Board on progress towards achieving them. We publish an evaluation of the success in meeting these objectives for parents and guardians, on the school website.

Roles and Responsibilities

We expect all members our school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this.

Trust Board/Operational Board

The Trust Board/Operational Board are responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and actions are implemented. Every Governors' sub- committee keeps aspects of the schools' commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, and personnel issues. Trust Board/Operational Board annually review the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the Schools Equalities Work taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g. data) and qualitative evidence (e.g. surveys)

Head of School and Leadership team

The Head of School is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

The Head of School and Senior Leadership Team have day-to-day responsibility for coordinating implementation of the policy and for monitoring outcomes. They will have expert and informed knowledge of the Equality Act.

Teaching and Support Staff

All teaching and support staff will:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- challenge prejudice and discrimination
- deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
- plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the school's principles, for example, in providing materials that give positive images in terms of race, gender and disability

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- maintain the highest expectations of success for all students
 - support different groups of pupils in their class through differentiated planning and teaching, especially those who may (sometimes temporarily) find aspects of academic learning difficult
 - keep up to date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

We will provide training and guidance on Equalities for all staff new to Skills for Life Trust as part of the induction procedure. We will go through the principal expectations and duties of the Equality Act at a whole staff meeting at the start of the Academy year.

Equal Opportunities for staff

This section deals with aspects of equal opportunities relating to staff. We are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment. All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law. We are also concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.

As an employer we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce. We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice. We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Disseminating the policy

This Equality Policy is available

- on the Trust website
- as paper copies by request from the main office
- on display for visitors, including parents and guardians
- as part of induction for new staff

We publish on the Trust website copies of relevant policies and guidance, including those on behaviour, anti-bullying and special educational needs.