

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2025

EKC Schools Trust

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1. Purpose of Policy and Guiding Principles

EKC Schools Trust is committed to serving our communities, upholding and valuing equality, diversity, and inclusion, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are at the heart of our culture as educators and as an employer.

This policy outlines our commitments to the protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010 ((and the Equality Act Amendments 2023) hereby referred to as The Act), as well as the operational steps that the Trust takes to advance equality within the organisation.

We will treat our communities - pupils and students, families, staff and governors – and our stakeholders – prospective families and staff, visitors, contractors and partners - with dignity and respect. We oppose all forms of prejudice and discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Links With Other Policies, Procedures and Guidance

Our inclusive culture underpins all aspects of decision-making, policy, procedures, education provision, and employment. Including:

- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Statement, which outlines our published equality objectives and progress
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Individual academy curriculum plans, policies, and procedures on Behaviour, SEND and Inclusion
- Admissions Policy
- All Employment Policies
- The Trust works in accordance with the Prevent agenda and is committed to ensuring pupils and students are aware that behaviours and activities associated with discrimination, harassment and extremism will be promptly and robustly addressed.

2. Our commitments

The Trust commits to:

- Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion and foster a sense of belonging for pupils, students and staff (and our wider community); and where necessary, implement reasonable adjustments or additional support to ensure equality of access to an education and a suitable working environment (including access to training, development and progression).
- Ensure all policies and practices relating to the provision of education including the curriculum, behaviour for learning, attendance, exclusion, medical treatment and Child Protection and safeguarding are underpinned by the duties of the Act.

- Welcome all pupils and students, families and staff to the Academy and Trust, with an 'induction' which introduces the culture of the Trust as an inclusive and liberating place to learn and to work, which is further reinforced and embedded during their time with the Trust.
- Raise awareness of and celebrate diversity in age-appropriate formats, such as assemblies, PSHE, or student councils, and reinforce this agenda through enrichment activities that support it.
- Create a learning and working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all are recognised and valued.
- Ensure that all service providers that are contracted to provide services on behalf of the Trust comply with equalities legislation.
- Encourages staff to voluntarily report their diversity data for the purpose of monitoring and developing meaningful actions to promote and support diversity.
- Take seriously failure to uphold the inclusive values and ethos of the Trust and or failure to uphold the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Taking action in line with the appropriate policy. Where services are deemed not to meet Trust/Academy standards, in relation to equal opportunities and fairness, contracts may be terminated.
- Monitor and improve what we do, by consulting with our community and stakeholders and reviewing practices and procedures as necessary to ensure fairness and compliance.
- The Trust may take proportionate positive action to overcome or minimise disadvantages experienced by people with protected characteristics, meet their different needs, or encourage their participation where it is disproportionately low.

The Trust will adhere to statutory Government legislation and give consideration to other relevant guidance, which aims to make sure that everyone is treated with equality.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board are responsible for:

- Making sure the Trust meets all its duties under relevant legislation.

The CEO is responsible for:

- Giving a consistent and high-profile lead in advancing equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Leaders at all levels are responsible for:
- Putting policy into practice, championing equality, diversity and inclusion, and acting as role models to ensure that it is promoted and embedded.
- Ensuring all staff know their responsibilities and receive the support and training to carry these out.

- Taking action (following the relevant procedures) in cases of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

All Staff are responsible for:

- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in line with this and related policies.
- Actively responding to any incidents of inappropriate behaviour or language by students, other staff or stakeholders.
- Keeping up to date with equality, diversity and inclusion best practice both in respect to embedding best practice within teaching and learning, but also mandatory training on staffs' roles and responsibilities in ensuring equality and diversity is upheld

All staff and leaders are accountable for upholding this policy and may be subject to disciplinary action if they fail to do so.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, members of our community, stakeholders and the public.

Students and Pupils are responsible for:

- Respecting others in their language and actions in accordance with this policy and the culture, ethos and school standards.

4. Complaints

The Trust will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful (or potentially unlawful) discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation.

Any complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Trust's Grievance or Complaints Policy, whichever is appropriate.

5. Monitoring and Review

The Trust will monitor the following data points, taking positive action to strengthen policies, procedures and practices to advance the aims of this policy and our inclusive culture:

- Pupils and students, and Parent/Carer voice surveys will ask whether pupils and students feel safe and are happy and achieving in school.
- Staff voice surveys will ask staffs' feedback on Trust culture, comfort in showing up as your authentic self and feelings of dignity and respect.
- Gender Pay Gap Reporting
- People Strategy Progress Reports
- Achievement and attendance differences of student cohorts e.g. disadvantaged pupils, with a view to diminishing gaps

Appendix 1 - Definition of Terms

Equality means ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010, which legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. Our Trust promotes equality through our policies, practices, and culture.

Diversity refers to the presence and recognition of differences among people in our Trust community, including (but not limited to) race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and socio-economic background.

Inclusion is about how we behave to ensure everyone feels respected, valued, and able to fully participate. Our Trust expects all members of the community to act with empathy, fairness, and respect for others.

Belonging is the emotional outcome of inclusion. Our goal is for every individual to feel safe, accepted, and valued as a full member of our Trust community.

Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic. It can be:

- **Direct:** treating someone worse because of a protected characteristic.
- **Indirect:** applying a policy or practice that disadvantages people with a protected characteristic.
- **By association:** treating someone unfairly because of their connection to someone with a protected characteristic.
- **By perception:** treating someone unfairly because you think they have a protected characteristic, even if they don't

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated unfairly because they have made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act, or are suspected of doing so. This protection applies even if the complaint is not upheld, as long as it was made in good faith

Victimisation – Additional Clarification for Education Settings - It is unlawful to victimise a child because of actions taken by their parent, carer, or sibling under the Equality Act 2010. For example, if a parent raises a concern or complaint of discrimination in good faith, the child must not be treated unfavourably as a result.

If a pupil or student makes a complaint protected under the Act, the child's own good faith is relevant. Should it later emerge that the child knowingly provided false information, the school may take appropriate action in line with its behaviour policy. However, unless it is clearly established that the parent also acted in bad faith—such as knowingly submitting a false complaint—it remains unlawful to treat the parent unfairly for raising the concern.

This ensures that individuals, including children and their families, are protected from retaliation when engaging with their rights under the Equality Act.