Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Reviewed and approved by:

Trust Board

Approval Date:

20th October 2026

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Version:

1. Aims

1.1 This policy aims to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity and foster relations between groups.

1.2 This policy applies to employees, workers and all job applicants. It also applies to sub-contractors, in that the Trust will take all necessary steps to ensure good compliance and appropriate behaviours whilst on the premises. However, if any issues become apparent with regards to diversity or equality in relation to any contractor or third party's behaviour towards others, i.e. staff, pupils, other workers, these will be taken very seriously, and appropriate action will be taken which could include those individuals being asked to leave the premises.

1.3 The over-riding premise that will be adhered to in matters of equality, by all board members and staff, is that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect whatever their characteristics.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Role of Board Members

- The Board has set out its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion through this plan and will continue to do all it can to ensure full inclusivity.
- The Board seeks to ensure that individuals are not discriminated against when applying for jobs and welcomes all applications.
- The Board will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the work environment, resources and communications are as accessible and inclusive as possible.
- The Board ensures that no member of staff is discriminated against whilst at work on account of any of the protected characteristics identified as part of the Equality Act 2010.

2.2 Role of Senior Leader

- It is the Senior Leader responsibility to implement the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and they are supported by the Board in doing so.
- It is the Senior Leader's role to ensure that the Senior Leadership team is kept up to date with any development(s) affecting the policy or actions arising from it.
- It is the Senior Leader's role to ensure that everyone is aware of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and their responsibilities within it, and have access to training which helps to implement the policy.
- The Senior Leader ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, so that no one is discriminated against in respect of employment, promotional or training opportunities.
- The Senior Leader promotes the principle of equality of opportunity in all aspects of Trust life.
- The Senior Leader treats all incidents of unfair treatment and any incidents of bullying or discrimination, including racist incidents, with due seriousness and in line with the appropriate policy.

2.3 Role of Senior Leadership Teams

- The Senior Leadership Team will have responsibility for supporting everyone in implementing this policy.
- The Team will provide a lead in the dissemination of information relating to the policy.
- The Team, alongside the Senior Leader, will provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues.
- The Team will assist in implementing reviews of this policy, alongside the Senior Leader and Board.

2.4 Role of All Staff

- All staff will ensure that other members of staff are treated fairly, equitably and with respect and will maintain awareness of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy.
- All staff will strive to promote positive images, based on any and all protected characteristics and challenge stereotypical images throughout the Trust.
- All staff will challenge any incidents of less favourable treatment, prejudice or discrimination, drawing them to the attention of the Senior Leader, Senior Leadership Team or the Chair of the Board (in the case of incidents involving the Senior Leader).

3. Statutory Requirements

3.1 The board welcomes its duties under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.

3.2 The equality Act 2010 sets out the 'protected characteristics' that qualify for protection from discrimination. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

4. Harassment or Bullying

4.1 The Trust is committed to providing a working environment in which all employees, workers, governors, contractors and visitors are treated with dignity and respect. The Trust will not tolerate bullying, harassment, victimisation or unlawful discrimination of any kind. This includes conduct related to any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 as listed in section 3.2.

4.2 The Trust recognises its legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and other unlawful discriminatory conduct in the workplace, including harassment by third parties such as parents, visitors, contractors, suppliers or members of the public.
Appropriate preventative measures may include:

- staff training;
- clear reporting procedures;
- risk assessment;
- prompt investigation of concerns; and
- appropriate management action where concerns are substantiated.

4.3 Bullying, harassment and victimisation may constitute misconduct or gross misconduct and will be dealt with under the appropriate Trust procedures, including the Bullying and Harassment Policy, Grievance Procedure and/or Disciplinary Procedure, as appropriate.

4.4 Any employee who believes they have experienced, witnessed or been subjected to bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination is encouraged to raise the matter as soon as possible through the appropriate reporting channels. Concerns will be treated seriously, sensitively and, wherever possible, confidentially.

4.5 The Trust will not tolerate victimisation against any individual because they have:

- raised a concern or complaint;
- supported another person's complaint;
- acted as a witness; or
- participated in an investigation or procedure under this policy.

Any act of retaliation or victimisation may result in disciplinary action.

4.6 This policy applies to conduct:

- in the workplace;
- during work-related activities;
- at work-related social events;
- on educational visits or training events; and
- within online or digital environments where conduct may affect working relationships or the reputation of the Trust.

4.7 Examples of prohibited conduct include, but are not limited to:

- offensive, intimidating or degrading comments;
- inappropriate jokes, banter or remarks;
- exclusionary behaviour;
- unwanted physical conduct;
- misuse of social media or electronic communications;
- deliberate misgendering or mocking of protected characteristics; and
- any behaviour which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment.

4.8 Further guidance regarding definitions, reporting processes, informal resolution and formal procedures is contained within the Trust's Bullying and Harassment Policy.

5. Religious Observance

5.1 The Board and Senior Leadership Team will not discriminate directly or indirectly when dealing with requests for time off for religious and belief observance. However, employees need to be aware that the law does not confer an automatic right for employees to have time off, or to be provided with facilities to undertake religious observance. Employees need to refer to the Leave of Absence Policy for guidance on time off for religious observance and to Appendix 1 of this document specifically relating to Hajj.

5.2 All staff, regardless of religious belief or non-belief, are required to work in accordance with their contracts.

5.3 Senior Leaders, while retaining the right to ensure appropriate cover, should make every attempt to ensure that those whose religion requires them to pray at certain times during the day are enabled to do so through agreed flexible working arrangements.

5.4 Schools are not required to provide a prayer room; however, they must make reasonable effort to provide an appropriate quiet place for staff to undertake their religious observance wherever practical within the needs of the Trust.

5.5 Schools are not required to enter into significant expenditure and/or building alterations to meet religious needs. For instance, some religions/beliefs require a person to wash before prayer. This is often done symbolically or by using the existing facilities.

6. Cultural Dress

6.1 The Trust recognises and respects the rights of employees to manifest their religion or beliefs through dress and appearance, subject to appropriate professional, safeguarding, health and safety and operational requirements.

6.2 Any restrictions relating to dress or appearance will only be applied where they are objectively justified, proportionate and necessary for legitimate reasons, including:

- effective communication;
- safeguarding;
- health and safety;
- security and identification requirements; or
- the effective performance of a role.

6.3 Where concerns arise regarding dress or appearance, these will be considered sensitively and on an individual basis, taking account of:

- the requirements of the role;

- the needs of pupils and the wider school community;
- the employee's rights under the Equality Act 2010; and
- the Trust's obligations in relation to safeguarding, health and safety and effective communication.

The Trust will seek, wherever reasonably practicable, to reach an appropriate and respectful resolution in consultation with the employee concerned.

7. Reasonable Adjustments, Wellbeing and Inclusion

7.1 The Trust is committed to creating an inclusive working environment and recognises its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and applicants where a provision, criterion, practice or physical feature places them at a substantial disadvantage.

7.2 Reasonable adjustments may include, but are not limited to:

- Adjustments to working arrangements or duties;
- Provision of specialist equipment or support;
- Amendments of recruitment processes;
- Flexible working arrangements;
- Phased returns following absence; or
- Adjustments to communication methods or the working environment.

7.3 Employees are encouraged to discuss any adjustments or support requirements with their line manager or HR at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate support can be considered.

7.4 The Trust recognises that some employees may experience health conditions or circumstances which require additional understanding and support, including:

- menopause and peri-menopause;
- neurodivergent conditions;
- mental health conditions;
- long-term health conditions; and
- gender reassignment.

7.5 The Trust recognises neurodiversity as an important aspect of inclusion and is committed to creating a working environment in which neurodivergent employees feel supported and able to thrive. Further guidance is available within the Trust's Neurodiversity Guidance document.

7.6 Absences related to disability, menopause-related medical treatment, gender reassignment treatment or other protected circumstances will be managed appropriately and sensitively in accordance with the relevant Trust procedures and applicable legislation.

8. Positive Action

8.1 The Trust recognises that the avoidance of discrimination alone may not be sufficient to achieve equality of opportunity for all groups.

8.2 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the Trust may take proportionate action measures to:

- Encourage applications from underrepresented groups;
- Support career development opportunities;
- Promote inclusive recruitment practices;
- Encourage flexible working arrangements where operationally feasible; and
- Support equality of opportunity across the workforce.

8.3 Any positive action measures implemented by the Trust will be lawful, proportionate and designed to address disadvantage, underrepresentation or barriers experienced by particular groups.

9. Equality Monitoring and Review

9.1 The Trust is committed to monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and related employment practices to help identify and address any potential inequalities or barriers within the workplace.

9.2 Monitoring may include analysis of:

- Recruitment and selection;
- Training and promotion;
- Staff turnover;
- Grievances and disciplinary matters;
- Bullying and harassment complaints;
- Flexible working requests; and
- Absence data.

9.3 The Trust may collect equality monitoring information from employees and applicants for the purpose of reviewing equality data and meeting its legal obligations. The provision of such information will normally be voluntary.

9.4 All equality monitoring information will be handled confidentially and processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

9.5 The Trust will review this policy periodically to ensure it remains compliant with current legislation, reflects best practice and continues to support an inclusive working environment.

Appendix 1

1.1 The Trust recognises that Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and that eligible Muslims may wish to undertake the pilgrimage during their employment.

1.2 Requests for leave relating to Hajj will be considered in accordance with the Trust's Leave of Absence Policy and with due regard to operational requirements, fairness and the needs of pupils.

1.3 Employees wishing to request leave for Hajj should submit their request as early as reasonably practicable in order to support workforce planning and minimise disruption to service delivery.

1.4 Requests will be considered fairly and consistently, taking account of:

- The operational needs of the Trust/School;
- The timing and duration of the request;
- The impact on pupils and colleagues; and
- The individual circumstances of the employee.

1.5 Employees should not make financial commitments, including booking travel, until formal approval for leave has been granted.

1.6 Unauthorised absence or failure to return following approved leave without reasonable explanation may be managed under the appropriate Trust procedures.