

Equalities and Respect Policy

April 2021

To be reviewed: May 2022

By: MF/C&P

1. Rationale

Ours is a community of learning, where secure partnerships create opportunities for students, staff, governors, parents and carers alike to participate and grow to become intellectually, emotionally and socially *fit for life*.

2. Objectives

Cedars Academy Trust is committed to the Equality Act 2010. This policy shows the ways in which the academy ensures inclusion and equality with regard to fair outcomes, making a difference to everyone in the school community.

We are committed to ensuring inclusion and equality for all, so that no policies or practices result in unfair or less favourable treatment of pupils or adults on the grounds of a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics in the Equality Act that apply to everyone are;

- Gender
- Race
- Disability including learning difficulties
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief including having no belief.

There are two further characteristics which apply to adults: age and marital or civil partnership status.

We also include other areas of equality, such as gifted or talented ability, social and economic circumstance, and speakers of languages other than English.

Our academy is an inclusive school and college where we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and where all members of our community are of equal worth.

We believe every possible effort must be made to ensure that individuals within this school are valued and have the opportunity to develop their full potential within a context of mutual respect, justice and fairness.

We have high expectations of all our staff and learners and ensure that they achieve their best, whatever their abilities, disabilities, gifts or talents.

All individuals within the academy are entitled to learn, teach and work within a non-threatening and supportive environment in which the development of self-esteem and confidence is enhanced. We want everyone in the academy community to be proud of who and what they are, and of their academy community.

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.

The academy has equality duties as an employer, a provider of education to children, and as a provider of services to parents/ carers and others in the community.

The governing body is aware of its equality duties and endeavours to fulfil them and at all times to follow equality principles.

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. The school has achieved Level 2 of the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award.

All public organisations, including schools, have to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to:

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

As a school, we also have a specific duty to:

- Publish information showing how we comply with our general duty
- Publish equality objectives which are specific and measurable, at least every four years

The Equality and Respect Policy will be reviewed every two years. We involve and consult staff, learners, governors and parents and carers. We report annually to the Governing Body and through newsletters, on the school website and at parents' meetings.

The objectives which we identify represent our academy's priorities and are the outcome of careful review 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 Analyses which inform our discussions about the Equality Objectives.

OFSTED will inspect and report on how effectively equality legislation and guidance is followed. The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) has the power to ensure that equality legislation and guidance is followed, through due legal process.

3. Key Principles

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

1. All learners are of equal value and we work to raise standards for all.
2. We have the highest expectations of all our children. We expect that all learners can make good progress and achieve to their highest potential
3. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
4. We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other. We recognise that unfairness exists in our society and that it is possible to make changes, through our own behaviour and practices, which will help to eliminate unfairness and to create a more cohesive community.
5. We promote a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of our school community to feel that they belong within the school and wider community, and that they are respected and able to participate fully in school life.
6. 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 recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.
7. We will ensure that no employee, learner, parent/carer or visitor will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds (protected characteristics) listed above.
8. All members of the school community are protected by, and responsible for implementing equality duties in all areas of school life. For equality duties to be effective, we must have a whole school approach, with:
 - Supportive leadership and management at all levels
 - Clear messages to all
 - Explicit policies, procedures and practices
 - Consistency and coherence
 - Impact assessments across all areas
 - Effective monitoring and review systems

4. Policies and Practice

The principles of our Equality and Respect Policy apply to all our policies and practices. Although this policy is the key document for information about our approach to equalities in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, information and evidence of our policy in action is also included in other policies including

Teaching and Learning

Curriculum

Admissions

Positive Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policies

School Development Plan

Rights Respecting School Status

Staff Handbook

Staff Relationship Guidelines

Safeguarding

Staff Code of Conduct

School website and newsletters
SEND Policy

The Governing Body considers equality issues in all areas of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation.

We 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. These are impact assessments. We involve those who are affected by a policy or activity in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones.

We collect data and monitor progress and outcomes of different groups of learners and use this data to support school improvement and take action to close any gaps. We regularly carry out Equality Data Analyses and act promptly to address any areas of concern that we find. We also report this data to the local authority when required to do so.

We maintain records of all aspects of equalities training. We have a programme of induction to ensure we meet the school's changing needs and to reflect our changing population.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (see also Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy)

All our learners have special educational needs and we aim to meet their needs in all aspects of provision. Our SEND Policy sets out how we do this and is in line with the recommendations in, the SEN Code of Practice (2015). Regular reports are made to the Governing Body, which has specific legal duties towards learners with special educational needs.

The definition of disability is "a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and adverse long-term effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities" (Disability Discrimination Act, 1995). This includes those with learning difficulties; those with mental illness, such as depression; those who have a physical or sensory impairment, such as cerebral palsy or deafness, which impedes their ability to carry out normal day to day activities; people with disfigurements; and those with progressive conditions, such as cancer. This means that the legal definition applies to and protects all our learners and a number of staff, governors, parents/carers and visitors.

We always make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of our learners. We have an Accessibility Plan (SEN and Disability Act 2001) in place to:

- Improve access to the curriculum
- Improve access to the physical school environment
- Improve communication by providing information in a range of accessible formats for disabled learners

The Accessibility targets are incorporated into our Equality Objectives and Equality Action Plan. We set new targets as appropriate and at least every three years. The success of the SEND policy and Accessibility Plan is reported to the Governing Body, through newsletters, on the school website and at parents' meetings.

We also take account of the SEN & Disability Code of Practice 2015: 0-25 years.

We ensure that children, young people and parents are actively involved in decision-making and that we provide them with the information, advice and support necessary to enable them to participate in discussions and decisions about their support, in accessible forms. (SEND CoP 2015, 1.9)

We believe that special educational provision is underpinned by high quality teaching and is compromised by anything less. (SEND CoP 2015, 1.24). We recognise that all children and young people are entitled to an appropriate education, appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential, to enable them to:

- achieve their best
- become confident individuals living fulfilling lives, and
- make a successful transition into adulthood (SEND CoP 2015,6.1)

We have high expectations for every pupil, whatever their prior attainment. Teachers use appropriate assessment to set targets which are deliberately ambitious. (SEND CoP 2015, 6.12) All teachers and support staff who work with the learners are made aware of each individual's needs, the outcomes sought, the support provided and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required. This is also recorded on the school's information system. (SEND CoP 2015, 6.49)

5. Examples of what we do to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

We do not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying. Staff are trained to know how prejudice-related incidents should be identified, assessed, recorded and dealt with. We have agreed how teachers should respond to any learner who uses racist, sexist or other abusive language.

We keep a record of different equality-related incidents and report to governors on these and how we have dealt with them. We review this data termly and take action to reduce such incidents.

If any aspect of our Equality and Respect Policy or related policies is ignored by adults or children in our school community, we take action, first by talking to those involved and attempting to resolve any issues or concerns. Should further action be necessary, our policies on safeguarding, behaviour, discipline and complaints and our Staff Code of Conduct set out how we will deal with what has occurred. We send appropriate letters to parents/carers of pupils who breach our policy.

We are a Mentoring & Coaching school and the culture of our school encourages openness. We ask all in the school community to tell us if they are unhappy and we guarantee that the appropriate person will listen. This is in keeping with our Staff Relationship Guidelines. We want to get things right. We also have a clear process to enable learners to raise concerns and make complaints: learners can talk to any adult, who will then take appropriate action.

The school admits learners with a very wide range of special educational needs and disabilities in line with the local authority policy. Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent and regularly reviewed. We do not discriminate against learners by treating them less favourably on the grounds of any protected characteristic or disability.

We use opportunities within the curriculum and across the school day to discuss equality issues, to encourage learners to value and respect others, and to challenge inappropriate attitudes and behaviours.

Staff recognise that their expectations directly affect the achievement, behaviour and self-esteem of learners. They understand that it is their responsibility, and duty of care, to challenge prejudice and discriminatory behaviour both in and out of the classroom, as these will hinder the achievements of our learners.

Our positive behaviour policy and Anti Bullying policies address bullying and harassment and ensure that learners understand about kindness, respect and empathy, to prevent discrimination. As part of our Positive Behaviour Policy, reparation ('fix it') is key to resolving issues between pupils.

Exclusions, albeit extremely rare, are monitored for any evidence of over-representation of particular groups or bias that might influence the cause of the exclusion or its duration. We take action promptly to address concerns i.e. meeting parents, developing interventions, referrals to our Multi Agency Support Team (MAST).

We do not discriminate in relation to staff in: recruitment; terms and conditions of employment; promotions; transfers; dismissals; training; employment practices such as dress code, leave and disciplinary procedures; or because of any of the protected characteristics, adhering to safer recruitment practices. We monitor applications and appointments to ensure equity.

Staff are protected by all aspects of the Equality and Respect policy. They have the right to work without fear of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. All staff have the responsibility to ensure that the equality rights of others are protected and to record any incident of prejudice or discriminatory behaviour using appropriate referral procedures.

We ensure that no-one is treated less favourably than others because they do, or do not, have a religion or belief. Our curriculum is inclusive and we celebrate the range of religions and beliefs held within the school community. We meet specific identified religious needs e.g. we provide a prayer room for Muslim staff and learners as appropriate, i.e. at Ramadan.

We do not make assumptions that partners are of the opposite sex, nor that everyone is heterosexual or from a heterosexual family.

We recognize the rights of learners and adults in relation to gender reassignment or transgender status and have support procedures for anyone experiencing difficulties related to gender or sexual identity. Their sexual identity or gender status will not adversely affect any opportunity offered nor any aspect of their lives in school. All learners and all adults within our school community have the right to respect and acceptance whether they are, or are perceived to be, heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or with transgender status, and whether or not they choose to disclose it. Homophobic or transphobic behaviour is not tolerated.

We do not discriminate in relation to pregnancy or maternity.

We do not discriminate in recruitment, promotion or training on the grounds of age, unless there are objectively justifiable reasons. We will consider a request from a member of staff to work beyond retirement age. Equality rights with regard to age do not apply to learners.

6. Examples of what we do to promote equality of opportunity between groups

We ensure equality of access for all learners to a broad and balanced curriculum relevant to their diverse individual needs, removing barriers to participation. The Family Inclusion Team (FIT) works to ensure that the needs of all families are known and met, as far as possible.

We also take account of the needs of learners who may need support for English as an additional language (EAL) and of parents/carers who may need an interpreter, translator or signer.

We make reasonable adjustments or give more favourable treatment to disabled individuals where this would improve access and participation for them and enable them to benefit as fully from what the school has to offer as non-disabled people. This is in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and Equality Act (2010).

We ensure that our school environment is accessible to all; we provide appropriate aids, equipment and resources as necessary to enable learners to gain full access to the curriculum and we organise classrooms for ease of access for learners and adults with disabilities, (see Accessibility Plan).

The school actively promotes equality of opportunity between boys and girls, men and women, as an employer, provider of education and provider of services to the community. We encourage boys and girls to participate fully in areas where traditionally they do not always perform well.

Learners are encouraged to participate in all areas of school life. We ensure that learners with difficulties that affect their learning, behaviour and social and emotional development are appropriately supported so that they have access to all the learning and social opportunities that the school offers.

We provide opportunities to discuss issues around gender, sexual identity, race/ethnicity, disability, religion, language. Staff understand the importance of promoting awareness of the contributions to knowledge made by people who have disabilities, are from different ethnic groups, lesbian, gay or bisexual. We recognise that positive images of people will work to counteract stereotyping.

In planning work and activities, staff assess the possible impact of what is planned for different individuals and groups and make any appropriate adjustments to ensure access, participation and learning for all learners where possible. For outings or school journeys, staff carry out risk assessments and make reasonable adjustments to ensure optimum participation for all learners.

We focus on preparation for adult life and on developing strategies for life-long learning, by providing challenging opportunities which meet individual needs eg residential trips, visits abroad, Vocational Studies, Work Related Studies & Life Skills etc.

Staff receive continuing professional development through continual training and in practice, to ensure that everyone understands and implements all aspects of the Equality and Respect Policy.

We have a number of on-site therapists and specialists who are able to meet a wide range of learners' needs and we draw on a diverse range of external services and voluntary and community organizations, eg Kalmer Counselling. The Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) works with class teams to support the most vulnerable pupils. It also works as a universal service to families within the school community.

Data is gathered regularly on all aspects of learner achievement and attainment. It is analysed in terms of difference e.g. gender, ethnicity, free school meals, type of SEN, disability, and if any groups of learners are seen to be making slower progress or doing less well than we expect, then action is taken to investigate the cause and make improvements. For example, we are particularly concerned to ensure that children with high medical needs are supported to access all learning opportunities. We closely monitor the attendance of different groups and address any issues promptly to ensure access to learning. We also monitor attendance at extra-curricular, extended day and parents' activities and encourage participation of all groups in our school community.

Monitoring for equality is carried out through the school's regular systems e.g. through data analysis, consultation, regular observations of lessons and other curricular activities, surveys of parent/carer and learner views. We involve a wide range of staff, governors and outside agencies in this. Regular reports are made to the Governing Body.

We recognize that the school is a socially and economically diverse society and that our families and staff come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. As far as possible, we ensure that, in relation to school, no learner or family is disadvantaged by their socio-economic status and that all are treated fairly and equitably. When we are aware that learners or families are in need of financial support, our staff ensure that appropriate information is given to parents/carers and they are put in touch with appropriate services and voluntary organisations.

7. Examples of what we do to foster good relations between groups

Cedars Academy has developed a wide range of links and activities to promote community cohesion, over many years. We prepare our learners for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that address international issues and promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our learners.

We use assemblies and opportunities within the curriculum, as appropriate to teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. We discuss equality issues, promote understanding and good relations and encourage learners to value and respect others and to challenge inappropriate attitudes and behaviours. We encourage all our children to have a voice, however where our children are unable to voice their own views, adults will advocate for them. We provide opportunities for learners to empathise with different experiences.

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, challenging stereotyping. All learners have the right to see non-stereotyped and positive role models and images of men and women from diverse groups. We ensure that our resources include the contribution of different cultures to throughout the world. We take all opportunities to celebrate the achievements of our learners and people with disabilities outside the school and in public life.

We promote a whole school ethos and values that challenge discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour. We provide opportunities for all learners to appreciate their own cultures and celebrate the diversity of other cultures. We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, invited visitors, whole school events e.g. Black History Month, support for a range of charities.

We ensure that in all aspects of school life, including dress, diet, names of learners and their families, we are aware of and respect cultural differences.

We work to establish good communication and co-operative relationships with parents/carers and to establish mutual understanding of expectations e.g. drop-in coffee mornings and learning opportunities for families.

Where possible, we ensure that information is accessible for our parents, through our Somali, and Bengali specialist family support workers. Where this is not possible, we engage services to provide information in community languages.

We hold well-attended and successful International Evenings for parents/carers and friends of the school. Parents, staff and friends are invited to contribute food from their own cultures and many provide entertainments with costumes, dance and music. Our pupils participate in these events and celebrate their cultural heritage with their peers.

8. Other ways we address equality issues

We review relevant feedback from parent questionnaires, parents' meetings, parent-school forums and/or focus meetings or governors' parent-consultation meeting, annual reviews and from complaints.

We analyse responses from staff surveys, staff meetings, training events and staff exit interviews.

We review team feedback and responses from the learners, their families and carers including from the Student Council and whole school surveys on learners' attitudes to self and school.

We invite responses and feedback at Governing Body meetings and from the Governing Body's working groups.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

We expect all members of the school community 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.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented. A member of the Governing Body has a watching brief regarding the implementation of this policy.

Every Governing Body committee keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, the welfare of learners, behaviour and exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment. Governors review the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the school's equalities work, taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g. data) and qualitative evidence (e.g. surveys and feedback).

The Executive Head and Senior Leadership Team are responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy; 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.

All teaching and support staff will:

Know about the learners they work with and their background

Promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classrooms

Challenge prejudice and discrimination with confidence and authority

Deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur

Plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the school's principles e.g. in providing materials that show positive images in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability

Maintain the highest expectations of success for all learners

Support learners in their classes, through differentiated and personalised planning and teaching

Keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

We provide training and guidance on Equalities for all staff new to the school as part of the induction procedure. We go through the principal expectations and duties of the Equality Act with staff at the start and during the school year e.g. through Culture Groups.

We expect all visitors to the school to support our commitment to Equalities and to comply with the Equality Act.

Date policy revised: January 2021

Date policy for review: Under constant revision during COVID-19 conditions