



EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

Key document details

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Reviewed: January 2023

Approver: Executive Leadership Team

Next Review: November 2024

Version	Issue Date	Details – reason for issue/nature of change
01	Oct 2020	Initial document
02	Nov 2022	As part of regular review
03	Jan 2023	Updated to include Equality objectives appendix

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Values statement

The Equality Act 2010 underpins our work on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). It lists the protected characteristics that we need to consider as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion underpins our shared vision of “All children, all backgrounds, all succeeding” and our mission, “to challenge educational and social inequality through the power of education.” Our commitment is demonstrated through our shared values to:

- Work Hard
- Be kind
- Have Courage

The Equality Act 2010 places a Public Sector Equality Duty on schools to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- 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

We define equality, diversity, and inclusion in the following ways:

Equality: ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to succeed and achieve their aspirations

We do this by addressing individuals and the institutional barriers that stand in their way. We do not treat everyone the same but respond to individual need and then take positive action to gain equality for members of groups with protected characteristics and others who have faced past discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping.

Diversity: ensuring that we celebrate difference rather than tolerate it

We do this by creating an environment where everyone feels valued and that they belong

Inclusion: ensuring that everyone in our community can take a full part in the life of our setting We do this by regularly reviewing the curriculum we offer, our information provision, our environment and all our policies and practices to ensure that the barriers to participation are removed and that reasonable adjustments are made.

Venturers Trust believe that to be successful in terms of DEI we:

- Meet legal statutory duties with commitment from the leadership team and governors
- Have processes in place to review policies and practices in terms of DEI
- Take positive action to gain a workforce that reflects the local community, and ensures the on-going well-being of that workforce
- Have a staff team trained to meet the needs of all children
- Have strategies in place to monitor the outcomes of our pupils from specific equality groups and

- to close the gaps (e.g., in achievement, attendance etc.)
- Engage effectively with equality communities and involve them in decision making
- Regularly review the curriculum and resources in relation to all protected characteristics
- Engage effectively with the range of parents/carers and local communities
- Have learner and staff voice at the heart of our DEI work

Aims

This policy is intended to assist us in putting this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not unwittingly commit unlawful acts of discrimination. Striving to ensure that the work environment is free from harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

This policy reflects our aim that all children from all backgrounds acquire the knowledge to achieve their aspirations and to make a positive contribution to their community. We want all children from all backgrounds to:

- achieve, acquire broad knowledge, make progress and attain well, particularly in the core skills of reading and maths
- attend well, behave well and be safe
- acquire the cultural capital they need
- acquire the behaviours to succeed in life outlined in our values: work hard, be kind, have courage
- show respect in valuing themselves and recognising the values of others
- uphold the values of the local, national and international community
- challenge injustice and possess the compassion, courage and understanding to do so fairly

We believe that:

- powerful knowledge is the answer to educational and social inequality
- the curriculum is the answer to the success of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups
- there is value in the knowledge relevant to our local communities
- all children should be provided with appropriate interventions to allow them to have a broad and positive education in which they can achieve their potential

We aim to empower our pupils to make informed choices, so they are better prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life within their community. We endeavor to promote positive relationships with parents/carers, governors and members of the wider community. Equality of opportunity cannot be realised without the involvement and commitment of all members of the school community and a common understanding of the pivotal role of equal opportunities in the context of the school's ethos and values, in particular, the recognition that the role of all staff is crucial in the delivery of the objectives of the policy.

We expect all our staff to act in a non-discriminatory manner and be mindful to avoid actions that will be deemed as harassment in the services we provide to the public and our wider community. We want our workforce to reflect the diverse communities we serve and we want all staff to feel valued, safe at work and to achieve their career goals within our organisation. We want to acknowledge the barriers certain staff may face as a result of protected characteristics and endeavor to remove them by listening and working with staff from minoritised groups.

Links to other policies

Equality, diversity and inclusion should be considered in all areas of Trust and Academy work. However, there are direct links to the following specific policy documents:

Pupil facing:

- Accessibility Plan
- Attendance policy
- Belonging, behaviour and engagement policy
- PSHE including RSE policy
- Safeguarding policy
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) policy

Staff facing:

- Adoption, Maternity, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave policies
- Equal opportunities policy
- Flexible working policy
- Gender Pay Gap report and action plan
- Menopause policy

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Discrimination under The Equality Act 2010 can be direct or indirect and the Act also prohibits harassment and victimisation.

The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- in relation to admissions,
- in the way it provides education for pupils,
- in the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service, or
- by excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment

A school's liability to not discriminate, harass or victimise continues to apply when a pupil has left the school and applies to actions connected to the previous relationship, such as providing references for former pupils or access to events for former pupils.

The Equality Act 2010 *replaces* various former Acts such as:

- **Sex Discrimination Act 1975**
- **Race Relations Act 1976**
- **Disability Discrimination Act 1995**

Staff are covered by the Equality Act across all protected characteristics.

Age as a protected characteristic does not apply to pupils in schools.

Disability provisions in the Equality Act are different from those for other protected characteristics in that they do not apply equally. You may, and often must, treat a disabled person more favorably than a person who is not disabled. The Act states that schools must make reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities and covers auxiliary aids where these are not already provided for through SEND provision. Schools are expected to improve the ways in which disabled students can access the school's curriculum, physical environment and information. There must be a written accessibility plan which should be implemented within a reasonable time. Schools

Gender reassignment is defined in the Equality Act as applying to anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process (or part of a process) of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes. This means that students do not need to be taking medical steps to transition to be covered under the act but must be taking steps to live in their preferred gender, or proposing to do so.

Marriage and civil partnership are covered in the Equality Act but are not relevant in the context of pupils and therefore the education section of the Act does not cover this protected characteristic. Concerns over forced marriage would be dealt with under a school's safeguarding policy and procedures.

Pregnancy and maternity apply to pupils under the Equality Act and schools must not treat a pupil less favorably because they become pregnant, they have recently had a baby or because they are breastfeeding.

Race as defined in the Equality Act includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. Schools need to make sure that pupils of all races are not singled out for different and less favorable treatment from that given to other pupils. Schools should check that there are no practices which could result in unfair, less favorable treatment of such pupils (e.g. imposing stricter behaviour sanctions on one group than others would receive in similar circumstances)

Religion or belief in the Equality Act, covers any religion and both religious and philosophical belief. The Act makes it clear that a lack of religion and a lack of belief are also protected characteristics.

Sex being a protected characteristic means that pupils of one sex cannot be treated less favorably. There should be no practices which result in unfair, less favorable treatment of boys or girls. The Act does not stop schools from separating students according to sex (for example for sex education) as long as this does not give students an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

Sexual orientation discrimination prohibits any sexuality being used as the basis for discrimination in connection with the provision of education.

Types of discrimination

Direct discrimination is always unlawful. It occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances because of a protected characteristic. An example of direct discrimination would be refusing to appoint a pupil as a prefect because they are gay. In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination can occur when a "provision, criterion or practice" is applied generally but has the

effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic. For example, holding a parent information event on a Friday evening could amount to indirect religious discrimination as it would be difficult for observant Jewish parents to attend. Indirect discrimination is unlawful unless it can be shown as “a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.” This means that the reason for the rule or practice is legitimate, and that it could not reasonably be achieved in a different way which did not discriminate

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct. For pupils, harassment only applies to disability, race and sex, and any case against the school around gender reassignment, religion or belief, or sexual orientation would be on grounds of direct discrimination rather than harassment.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a protected characteristic when they do not, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic by third parties such as staff, students, governors, parents, educational advisors.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

Responsibilities for equality and diversity

The Trust Board must:

- Carry out its legal duty in complying with the relevant legislation
- Endeavour to assess candidates objectively for employment and promotion against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.
- Comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations and make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.
- Reinforce the trust’s position as a provider of high-quality education and as a good employer providing development opportunities.
- Ensure that equality remains high on the trust’s strategic agenda.
- Establish good people management practices in which discrimination is recognised as an

organisational issue which needs an organisational response.

- Work towards a staffing and governing body that reflects the composition of the wider community.
- Ensure all staff work together with a shared sense of purpose to meet the needs of every student.
- Ensure that students and staff contribute towards a happy and caring environment by showing respect for, and appreciation of, one another as individuals.
- Enhance and develop the skills, knowledge and abilities of existing employees to realise their full potential, irrespective of background or employment status.
- Provide equal access to training and development opportunities for all staff, including those who work part-time, based on their assessed training needs.
- Promote greater awareness of equal opportunities and the contribution that staff, governors, parents/carers and students can make.
- Equip employees with the skills to provide personal and organisational solutions; to recognise discriminatory practices and behaviour and to promote anti-discriminatory behaviour generally.
- Ensure that complaints or evidence of failure to comply with the trust's equal opportunities policy will be dealt with promptly and fully investigated according to the relevant procedure (e.g., complaints relating to staff may be investigated either under the disciplinary, grievance or anti-harassment procedure as appropriate).

Role of Academy Leadership Teams (ALT):

The ALT is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are put in place to monitor the performance of potentially disadvantaged learners. Measures in place include:

- Identifying and investigating any patterns around exclusions and poor attendance/punctuality in respect of groups, monitoring differences in learner attitudes to work (particularly of those with protected characteristics) and towards each other with a view to identifying any significant patterns and issues.
- Addressing issues such as sexual or racial harassment, bullying and hostile behaviour and ensuring that there are effective procedures for reporting and responding to such incidents.
- Ensuring that the performance of different groups of learners is monitored and evaluated so that the particular needs of different learners are met.
- Evaluating the impact of additional support on achieving standards.

Role of ALT and middle leaders (MLT):

- To provide strategies to implement a rise in performance, aspirations and self-esteem of potentially disadvantaged learners.
- To provide staff development to raise awareness of differences in need and to promote strategies to raise achievement in all learners.
- To provide an environment that creates, affirms and supports ethnic, cultural, religious and social diversity and effectively promotes good personal, community and race relations.

Expectations of staff:

- Staff share a responsibility to challenge a learner, parent/carer or colleague who behaves in a discriminatory way and to encourage them to exhibit more appropriate attitudes or behavior.
- Anti-discriminatory practice involves the examination of our personal values, beliefs, attitudes and expectations to ensure that we work proactively to give equality of opportunity to all learners, parents/carers and colleagues at all times.
- Staff should provide extra-curricular activities and events that cater for the interests and

capabilities of all pupils and take account of parental concerns related to religion and culture.

- For staff to work in an anti-discriminatory way we need to have knowledge of relevant equal opportunities legislation and what this means for our practices and school policies.
- Parents/carers of students have a right to a genuine commitment by the school to concepts and practices that underpin equal rights legislation and policies and the avoidance of tokenistic behaviour.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity involves respect for all people and valuing their individuality and personal circumstances. It also involves encouraging and fostering a positive learning environment.
- To provide a broad and balanced curriculum that is designed to meet the diverse needs of students in curriculum design, subject options and pedagogy so that every learner can succeed.
- All staff will ensure that curriculum resources reflect and celebrate diversity.
- The pastoral care implications require monitoring and supporting the progress and development of all learners irrespective of prior learning attainment and background. Staff are vigilant towards those from minority groups or with disabilities, mDElcal conditions or other special educational needs (protected characteristics). In specific circumstances, making special arrangements for students with protected characteristics is appropriate.

Staff who commit serious acts of harassment may also be guilty of a criminal offence. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or parents and their families are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

Our responsibilities to students:

At Venturers Trust, we recognise that as well as fulfilling our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, in order to create an environment that is equitable for all, we must acknowledge that certain groups of society and therefore students in our academies, face a greater risk of prejudice and more challenges or barriers than others. As well as being responsive to the needs of our communities, we make the following commitments to supporting these groups:

Disability and Special Educational Needs

- An Academy will make whatever arrangements are reasonable and practical within financial constraints to ensure that disabled learners can gain access to the curriculum.
- An Academy will work effectively with local services and agencies to provide integrated support.
- An Academy will uphold the SEND Code of Practice and publish information about how it does this on its website.

Ethnic, indigenous, refugees, religious or any other group who may be considered as a minority within our school community have:

- Effective induction arrangements.
- Effective home-school liaison links made to strengthen our partnership with our parents/carers directly in their child's education.
- Cultural and linguistic diversity recognised and celebrated.
- Essential information translated into a community language when possible or necessary.
- Links established with local communities and their leaders.
- Effective interventions for ethnic minority and students who are early-stage English as an additional language (EAL) learners.
- For students from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, appropriate support to enable them to

achieve their best, following Local Authority guidance around attendance and best practice

- Students' names accurately recorded and as far as possible pronounced correctly. We expect students to respect the names from cultures or socio-economic groups other than their own.

Low income

- An environment where students can all feel at home and treated with dignity and available learning resources such as learning guides and on-line materials.
- For those in receipt of pupil premium funding, access to a balanced free school meal at lunchtime and full admittance to extension and core extra-curriculum activities independent of cost, in order to encourage social mobility.
- Regardless of access to pupil premium funding or benefits, we recognise that the cost of living means many families face financial difficulties and we will seek to support families by taking account of the cost of any activities or celebrations within academies and signpost to support and advice where necessary.
- Regardless of income, we strive to not make assumptions about the access to resources (online or otherwise), support and opportunities that students will have outside of school and will encourage high aspirations for all.

Sex and Gender

- Curriculum materials and pedagogy reasonably reflect a gender balance and extend aspirations and opportunities.
- Guidance is given on subject choices and careers to encourage learners to consider non- stereotypical opportunities.
- Gender issues are considered when preparing for, and following up, work experience and other work-related learning.
- Take account of positive role models such as staff, guest speakers and representatives in the promotion of specific gender initiatives (examples of 'gender initiatives' commonly seen in schools are an event designed to encourage more girls to pursue science, technology and engineering careers, or supporting boys who have been reluctant to engage in reading for pleasure).

Sexual orientation and identity, the academy will:

- Ensure no-one within the academy or using its services experiences discrimination or harassment.
- Ensure staff have received training on equality issues concerning sexual orientation.
- Broaden representation in school to reflect society.
- Ensure services consider difference and diversity, and are accessible to all who need them.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

Every academy across Venturers Trust holds weekly meetings to ensure that children who hold characteristics or belong to groups which could make them vulnerable are regularly monitored. The Trust Welfare and Inclusion Team quality assure these meetings and analyse the overall data to identify trends and target groups for intervention where there is a concern.

Each student's progress is tracked to monitor gaps in attendance, attainment, progress and participation. Where the academies hold data on students' protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities (i.e., Children in Care, English as an Additional Language (EAL), ethnic group, gender, pupils in receipt of pupil premium,

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Young Carers) data is analysed to ensure that groups of students are performing in line with their peers and are not over-represented in behaviour data (e.g., suspensions). Where a concern is identified, appropriate steps will be put in place to intervene.

For groups where academies do not hold data (e.g., sexual orientation) or for groups where information may be incomplete, we strive to ensure that these students are considered by allowing equal access to activities, ensuring that student voice is a central part of our monitoring and quality assurance and providing opportunities to feed back to Academy and Trust leadership teams.

Similarly for staff, the policy will be monitored regularly to ensure that expectations of staff are met, as well as the expectations that staff should have around being treated fairly, in line with equalities guidance and legislation. Staff at each academy are represented at a staff council and the Trust actively listens to staff from minoritised groups on how to improve policy and practice to foster good relations and make the Trust a supportive and welcoming workplace.

Appendix i: Trust Equality Objectives

Objective 1 – Culture and Policy

- All Trust policies are inclusive, celebrate diversity and ensure equity for students and staff regardless of background.

Why we have chosen this objective:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are at the heart of our practice as a trust; they do not stand alone but are woven through our work across curriculum, pastoral care, safeguarding and staffing. Policy provides an opportunity to make values explicit, set the culture and ensure consistency across the trust. All policies feed into practice that has the potential to impact on pupils and staff and several link directly to equalities, diversity and inclusion.

To achieve this objective, we plan to:

- Review trust policies, making explicit links to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Create a working party of staff who hold protected characteristics to provide feedback
- Work in partnership; HR and the Trust Inclusion Leads will work together to ensure consistency between pupil and staff-facing policy.
- Provide opportunities for pupils, parents and staff to give formal and informal feedback.
- Genuinely listen to this feedback and work with stakeholders to improve our policies.
- Engage with partners outside of the trust to inform our work.

Progress we are making towards this objective: *To be updated December 2023.*

Objective 2 – Pupils and Parents

- 2.1 Gaps between minoritised groups are closed across the trust and over-representation in behaviour sanctions is addressed.
- 2.2 Parents who hold protected characteristics or belong to other minoritised groups feel welcomed in our trust community.

Why we have chosen this objective:

Our trust vision is: 'All children, all backgrounds, all succeDEIng.' We know that nationally and locally, attainment and attendance for certain groups of pupils (such as those with Special Educational Needs and certain ethnic groups) is comparatively worse than their peers and the same groups are over-represented in suspensions and exclusions. It is essential that pupil data is analysed by group characteristics so that effective intervention and support can be put in place. Part two of this objective recognises that partnership with parents is essential to supporting all pupils and the trust acknowledges that those who belong to minoritised groups may face additional barriers when engaging with academies.

To achieve this objective, we plan to:

- Collect and analyse data regularly at academy level, including scrutiny of vulnerable groups.
- Review this data at a trust level and hold academy leaders to account.
- Hold vulnerable children's meetings weekly in each academy.
- Provide support and advice for staff in academies to provide targeted intervention to close gaps.

Progress we are making towards this objective: *To be updated December 2023.*

Objective 3 – Curriculum and Events

- The curriculum reflects the diversity of our local communities and wider society.

Why we have chosen this objective:

All pupils deserve to access a curriculum in which they see themselves reflected, which teaches them about their local area and enables them to link this to what they are taught about the wider world. The

potential for visits, outside speakers and engaging content is enhanced when using the local community as a resource.

To achieve this objective, we plan to:

- Review our curricula and map diversity and representation.
- Use the Bristol Race Equality Strategic Planning tool (strand 2) to evaluate work on race and develop an aligned approach for other protected characteristics.
- Conduct student voice exercises to inform ongoing curriculum work.
- Build up a bank of curriculum planning tools and resources, and further reading for staff around DEI topics.

Progress we are making towards this objective: *To be updated December 2023.*

Objective 4 – Staff

- Staff from minoritised groups are represented and meaningfully included at all levels within the trust.

Why we have chosen this objective:

Our aim is that Venturers Trust is an inclusive employer where staff from all backgrounds feel safe, welcomed and valued. Our goal is that the Trust as an employer represents minoritised groups in two ways. Firstly, we believe that the composition of our staff body should reflect that of society. Secondly, we want all employees to genuinely feel that their voices are heard, their suggestions valued and their concerns acted on.

To achieve this objective, we plan to:

- Review HR strategy relating to equal opportunities.
- Review all staff-facing policies from an DEI perspective.
- Survey staff to inform ongoing work.
- Set up a staff working party to take forward specific pieces of DEI work with HR and the Trust Inclusion Leads.

Progress we are making towards this objective: *To be updated December 2023.*

Objective 5 – Physical Environment

- The physical environment of our academies creates and sustains a sense of safety for pupils, staff and visitors from marginalised groups.

Why we have chosen this objective:

Physical and psychological safety are an essential foundation for learning, with schools providing sanctuary for learners and the community. Through securing the safety of the physical environment, we can ensure that we are supporting learners who have vulnerabilities and supporting them to achieve their full potential.

To achieve this objective, we plan to:

- Audit the physical environment in all academies.
- Collect student voice to inform ongoing work.
- Keep Accessibility Plans under ongoing review and ensure that any work required is planned in a timely way.

Progress we are making towards this objective: *To be updated December 2023.*

Appendix ii – Academy Equality Objectives

- **All learners are of equal value.** Regardless of disability, additional needs, ethnicity, culture, national status. Regardless of gender and gender identity, religious or non-religious affiliation, faith or sexual orientation.
- **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 staff and students may face, in relation to disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, belief or faith and sexual orientation. We celebrate the diversity of our school and believe that it is a strength, which should be respected by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
- **We foster positive attitudes and relationships.** We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other, both within and outside our school.
- **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.
- **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.
- **We have the highest expectations of all our children.** We believe that all pupils can make excellent progress from their starting points and achieve their fullest potential.
- **We work to raise standards for all pupils, but especially for the most vulnerable.** We believe that improving the quality of education and personal development for the most vulnerable groups of pupils raises standards across the whole academy. We aim for this, in turn, to benefit our wider community as well.