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Introduction

This policy sets out Unity Schools Trust's ("the Trust") approach to promoting equality, as defined within the Equality Act 2010. It covers the protected characteristics of age*, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership*, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, as well as our approach to fostering good relations and community cohesion. The Trust also aims to comply with the terms of its Funding Agreement and Articles of Association, copies of which are available on the Trust website.

Aims and values

The Trust aims to provide equality and excellence for all in order to promote the highest possible standards. The core values on which the policy is based include:

i. The elimination of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

ii. To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

iii. To foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements under the following legislation:

i. The Equality Act 2010, including the public sector equality duty in section 149, the school provisions in Part 6, and the accessibility planning duty in Schedule 10

ii. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, which require relevant public authorities to publish information to demonstrate compliance with the public sector equality duty and to publish specific and measurable equality objectives

The Trust will also have regard to the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 where relevant to SEND information duties and support for students with special educational needs and disabilities.

This document is also based on the Department for Education (DfE) advice for schools on the Equality Act, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) technical guidance for schools, the EHRC Public Sector Equality Duty guidance for schools, and current UK Government equality guidance from the Office for Equality and Opportunity and the Women and Equalities Unit.

***(NB: Age and marriage and civil partnership are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, but they do not apply to students in schools.)**

A Cohesive Community

The Trust seeks to:

i. promote understanding and engagement between communities

ii. encourage all children and families to feel part of the wider community
iii. understand and respond to the needs and hopes of all our communities
iv. tackle discrimination
v. increase life opportunities for all
vi. ensure that learning, teaching and the curriculum explore and address issues of diversity.

The Trust serves a variety of communities including:
i. extended communities (e.g. Trust schools, partner schools and local education networks)
ii. geographical communities (e.g. Woking, Runnymede, Surrey)
iii. the community of Britain
iv. the global community (e.g. through links made with communities abroad)
v. communities of interest (e.g. environmental groups, faith groups, ethnic or language groups)
vi. communities of friends (e.g. local clergy, business partners, arts, sports, voluntary and support groups).

Roles and Responsibilities

Trustees are responsible for:
i. making sure the Trust complies with current equality legislation
ii. making sure this policy is properly implemented
iii. making sure related procedures are followed

The Local Governing Council of each school is responsible for:
i. monitoring and evaluating progress of schools towards the equality aims and values
ii. delegating responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the aims and values on a daily basis to the Principal

The Principal is responsible for:
i. making sure the policy is readily available and that trustees, local governors, staff, students and their parents/carers know about it
ii. making sure its procedures are followed
iii. producing regular information for staff and governors about the policy and how it is working
iv. providing training on the policy
v. making sure all staff know their responsibilities and receive training and support in carrying these out
vi. ensuring the provision of a broad, balanced and culturally inclusive curriculum that provides opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with particular regard to the promotion of understanding and appreciation of difference and diversity, tackling prejudice, and developing the skills and attitudes that enable students to participate positively in the life of the school and community
vii. taking appropriate action in cases of harassment and discrimination.

Staff are responsible for:
i. promoting an inclusive and collaborative ethos in the classroom and the school as a whole
ii. modelling good practice, dealing with discriminatory or prejudice-related incidents and being able to recognise and tackle bias, stereotyping and harassment
iii. promoting equality and avoiding discrimination against anyone
iv. keeping up to date with the law on discrimination and taking training and learning opportunities.

Students are responsible for:

i. supporting the equality ethos
ii. sharing concerns or issues with a member of staff
iii. keeping equality and diversity issues on the agenda, which will recognise good practice and enable review and development. This may include:
    a. engagement in the development of the Anti-Bullying Policy and specifically the issues of racist, disability-related, sexist, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying
    b. developing school/class rules which challenge discriminatory behaviour

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

i. supporting the Trust's equality and diversity ethos
ii. sharing concerns or issues with senior staff

Visitors and contractors are responsible for:

i. following our expectations regarding equality

We will draw their attention to this policy on our signing in system at reception. A copy of the policy will be available for them to read on request.

Responsibility for overseeing equality practices in the Trust lies with the Chief Executive Officer. These responsibilities include:

i. coordinating and monitoring work on equality issues
ii. ensuring that reports of harassment or prejudice-related incidents (including racist, disability-related, religion or belief-related, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and sexist incidents) are dealt with and monitored
iii. monitoring the progress, attainment, attendance and participation of groups of students who may experience disadvantage or underrepresentation (e.g. children in care and previously looked-after children, students eligible for pupil premium, students with SEND, students from minority ethnic, students with English as an additional language or Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, disabled students and young carers)
iv. monitoring suspensions, permanent exclusions and behaviour sanctions.

Eliminating discrimination

The Trust is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and complies with the provisions on discrimination, harassment, victimisation and reasonable adjustments.

Trustees and all staff are regularly reminded of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty, for example during meetings. Where this has been discussed during a meeting it is recorded in the meeting minutes.

New staff receive training on the Equality Act 2010, the public sector equality duty, reasonable adjustments and prejudice-related incidents as part of their induction, and refresher information is provided when there are updates to legislation or guidance.

Advancing equality of opportunity

As set out in the DfE and EHRC guidance on the Equality Act, the Trust aims to advance equality of opportunity by:

i. Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people which are connected to a particular characteristic they have (e.g. students with disabilities, or gay students who are being subjected to homophobic bullying)

ii. Taking steps to meet the particular needs of people who have a particular characteristic (e.g. enabling Muslim pupils to pray at prescribed times)

iii. Encouraging people who have a particular characteristic to participate fully in any activities (e.g. encouraging students from underrepresented groups to be involved in the full range of school societies)

The Trust may also use lawful and proportionate positive action where this is evidenced as needed to address disadvantage, meet different needs or encourage participation.

Fostering good relations

The Trust aims to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it by:

i. Promoting respect, friendship and understanding of a range of religions, beliefs, cultures and identities through different aspects of the curriculum. This includes teaching in Religious Studies (RS), and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, but also activities in other curriculum areas. For example, as part of teaching and learning in English, students will be introduced to literature from a range of cultures

ii. Holding assemblies and student-led activities dealing with relevant issues, where students will be encouraged to take a lead.

iii. Encouraging and implementing initiatives to deal with tensions between different groups of students within each school. For example, school councils and other student voice groups should include representatives from different year groups and, where possible, a range of backgrounds. All students are encouraged to participate in their schools' activities, such as sports clubs. Schools also work with parents/carers to promote knowledge and understanding of different cultures and communities

Equality and Diversity Objectives

Objectives will be reviewed annually by school leaders, Local Governing Councils and Trustees, using equality information, and published at least every four years.

i. By the next review, each school will identify and reduce its most significant equality-related gaps in student attainment and progress, including gaps linked to race, disability/SEND, sex, where the data is available and reliable.

   To achieve this objective, we plan to: use termly attainment and progress reviews to identify school-level priorities; provide evidence-informed interventions; evaluate impact by student group; and report progress to Local Governing Councils and Trustees.

ii. Improve attendance, participation and sense of belonging for groups of students who may experience disadvantage, including students eligible for free school meals, students with SEND, looked-after and previously looked-after children, students from minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students, students with English as an additional language, and young carers.

   To achieve this objective, we plan to: review attendance, behaviour, curriculum participation, enrichment participation and student voice data termly; identify barriers; and implement targeted support in school improvement plans.

iii. Reduce the incidence and impact of racist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, sexist, disability-related and religion or belief-related language and incidents in our schools, while increasing students' confidence to report concerns.

To achieve this objective, we plan to: record and analyse prejudice-related incidents termly; respond consistently through education, sanctions and restorative work where appropriate; use assemblies, PSHE/RSHE, the curriculum and wellbeing programmes to build understanding; and review impact through incident data and student voice.

iv. Ensure that students who need reasonable adjustments, SEND support or other targeted support can access high-quality teaching, the curriculum, assessment, enrichment and pastoral support.

To achieve this objective, we plan to: provide staff training on adaptive teaching, reasonable adjustments and inclusive practice; monitor the quality of provision; and use student and parent/carer feedback to identify barriers.

v. Ensure that procedures for behaviour, suspensions and permanent exclusions are fair, effective and equitable, and that any disproportionality is identified and addressed.

To achieve this objective, we plan to: review behaviour, sanction, suspension, permanent exclusion and attendance data termly by student group where data is available and reliable; seek stakeholder feedback; and agree corrective actions where patterns of disproportionality arise.

vi Improve equality, diversity and inclusion in recruitment, retention and progression by removing unnecessary barriers and encouraging a diverse field of applicants, using lawful positive action where appropriate.

To achieve this objective, we plan to: monitor recruitment, shortlisting, appointment, retention and progression data where lawful and proportionate; train recruiting panels; use inclusive advertising; and review whether recruitment processes enable and encourage applications from all eligible applicants.

vii. Continue to improve accessibility for students, staff and visitors with disabilities, including access to the curriculum, specialist teaching areas, the physical environment and information.

To achieve this objective, we plan to: maintain a Trust-wide accessibility plan and school-level actions under Schedule 10 to the Equality Act 2010; continue the Trust-wide programme of estate improvement works; and ensure that new buildings, refurbishment projects, digital content and key information consider accessibility from the outset.

viii. Review priority policies to ensure that they clearly reflect the aim of inclusivity and the Trust's public sector equality duty.

To achieve this objective, we plan to: embed equality impact considerations in the policy review cycle; prioritise policies most relevant to equality, including SEND, behaviour, attendance, suspensions and permanent exclusions, admissions, anti-bullying, curriculum, recruitment and complaints; and record any resulting actions.

Monitoring, Reviewing and Assessing Impact

The Trust's Equality and Diversity Policy and equality objectives will be regularly monitored and reviewed by Trustees, local governors and staff to ensure that they are effective in eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation, promoting access, participation, equality of opportunity and good relations between different groups, and that they do not disadvantage particular sections of the community. Equality information will be reviewed annually and used to inform published equality objectives, school improvement planning and future decision-making.

The Trust will ensure that SEND, Accessibility, Anti-Bullying, Attendance and Behaviour policies align with the principles of this policy with respect to equality. Schools within the Trust will record and report prejudice-related incidents and use any patterns to inform preventative education, training and support.