



# Equality Policy

Date approved	July 2023
Date of next Review	July 2027
Status	Statutory

## OUR VISION

**A community of primary and secondary academies that are the first choice for students and families in Sussex, with an outstanding reputation for high aspiration and high achievement**

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define South Down's Learning Trust's (the Trust) commitment to equality and diversity and represents our commitment to a common set of values and objectives, and to a consistent approach to communicating, implementing and monitoring the policy.

## 2. Context

The Equality Act 2010 consolidated equality legislation and brought about a statutory requirement for public bodies to produce a single equality scheme. It also had the effect of replacing all previously existing legislation e.g. the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and the Sex Discrimination Act.

This single equality scheme (SES) integrates the general duties that apply to public bodies including academies and extends to all groups with protected characteristics; specifically, in relation to race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The duties cover staff, students, Trustees, Governors, volunteers and others who use the services of the Trust academies. The over-arching statement includes priorities and actions to eliminate discrimination and harassment for all and particularly those groups with protected characteristics.

The aims of these duties are to:

- eliminate unlawful racial, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation discrimination and harassment;
- promote equal opportunities;
- promote positive attitudes towards and between disabled persons, persons of different racial groups and genders, and sexual orientation.
- ensure that no employee suffers disadvantage or discrimination because of their age, or because of pregnancy and maternity.

The Trust and its academies are committed to equality in both employment and education provision. We aim to ensure that students, staff, parents, governors, trustees, contractors, partners, and other stakeholders are treated fairly, and with dignity and respect.

This policy encompasses the following protected characteristics:

- Age;
- Disability;
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin;
- sex (including transgender);
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation; and
- marriage and civil partnership (for employees)

### **3. Equality Statement**

The Trust will ensure that equal opportunities and the principles of fairness underpin all aspects of policy, procedure, education provision, consultation and decision making.

The Trust is committed to equality in its delivery of education, whether or not the service is directly provided by us or contracted out to a third-party provider.

Where necessary, the Trust will implement reasonable adjustments, or additional support, to ensure equality of access to the curriculum and an inclusive working environment.

The Trust will adhere to statutory legislation and give consideration to other relevant guidance, with the aim of ensuring all members of the Trust community are treated fairly.

The Trust is committed to ensuring that employees have equal access to jobs, training, and professional development opportunities. All employment policies refer to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. The Trust recognises that the Act extends beyond the protected characteristics of an individual employee and has broader responsibilities to employees and situations that maybe covered by the Act. For example, an employee with parental or caring responsibilities for a disabled dependent may have rights under the Act which the Academy would need to consider. All recruitment will be within the provisions of the act, and applications will be monitored to report on recruitment activity, in line with the act.

The Trust and its academies will ensure that students are provided with appropriate support to recognise their individual needs. This includes protection under the Act extending the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled students. Each Academy publishes an Accessibility Plan.

The Trust will ensure that all service providers that are contracted to provide services to students, staff or visitors operate in compliance with Equalities legislation. Where services are deemed not to meet Trust/Academy standards, in relation to equal opportunities and fairness, contracts may be terminated.

The Trust will not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour against members of the community.

Employees who are in breach of this policy will be dealt with under the Trust's disciplinary policy.

### **4. Responsibilities**

The Trust Board through the Executive Headteacher and Headteachers of the academies, is responsible for ensuring the following:

- the academies comply with all equalities legislation and follow agreed equality and diversity policies;
- the single equality scheme is implemented and reviewed.

It will achieve these broad aims through:

- the promotion of equality as an explicit aim in policies agreed at Trust and academy level, thereby embedding equality as a fundamental principle in all dimensions of the Trust's work;
- ensuring policies contain positive endorsement of diversity which recognises the contribution of individuals towards the organisation as a whole and promotes community cohesion;

- ensuring that equality policies are developed in consultation with key stakeholders;
- ensuring students are not discriminated against in the provision of services offered to them in relation to their education;
- ensuring all role descriptions include a commitment to equality and diversity as part of their specifications;
- ensuring that all recruitment, employment, promotion and staff development policies and practice reflect the ethos and requirements of equalities legislation;
- incorporating equality targets into the Trust Strategic Priorities and Action Plan and Academy Raising Achievement Development Plans;
- making sure the single equality scheme is published.

**Headteachers and Academy Leadership Teams are responsible for:**

- giving a consistent and high-profile lead on equality and diversity.
- putting the Trust's equality and diversity policies into practice.
- Ensuring that all staff know their responsibilities and receive the support and training necessary to carry them out.
- Following the relevant procedures and taking action in cases of unfair discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.
- ensuring that employment practices, promotions and staff development are implemented fairly and are actively non-discriminatory;
- producing regular information for Trustees on the delivery and implementation of the scheme;
- ensuring academy communications with stakeholders reflect the diversity of the student/staff population.

**All staff**

All staff are responsible for:

- treating one another and all students with respect;
- promoting equality and diversity and avoiding unfair discrimination.
- actively responding to any incidents of unfair discrimination, related to protected characteristics perpetrated by students, other staff or visitors.
- keeping up to date with equality law and participating in equal opportunities and diversity training.
- challenging negative stereotypes and providing students with access to a diverse range of resources, experiences, and role models;
- encouraging the teaching and/or use of community languages;
- forging positive relationships between home and school;

- preventing and tackling instances of discriminatory behaviour, abuse, bullying and intimidation;
- tackling any form of harassment, and being able to recognise and tackle racial, gender or disability bias and stereotyping;
- challenging negative language and actions, re-educating and using sanctions where appropriate;
- promoting positive attitudes towards equal opportunities, and avoiding discrimination against anyone on the grounds of a protected characteristic;
- keeping up to date with the law on discrimination and taking up training and learning opportunities.

### **Students**

All students are responsible for:

- respecting others in their language and actions.
- following Academy equality and diversity policies.

### **5.Implementation**

The principles of this policy will be applied to:

- Admissions and transfer procedures.
- Assessment, and subsequent groupings by ability/attainment levels.
- Curriculum, teaching and learning.
- Student behaviour, discipline, sanction and reward.
- Exclusions (fixed term and permanent).
- Staff recruitment and career development.
- Membership of the Trust Board and Local Governing Committees.
- Stakeholder engagement.
- Wider community engagement.
- Pastoral and welfare support.

### **6.Data Protection Notice**

The Trust processes personal data in accordance with the data protection principles embodied in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

### **7. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Trust and the academies will review and update the equality objectives every four years and report annually to the Trust Board on progress towards achieving them. The Trust will annually publish information indicating how we are meeting the requirements of the public sector equality duty.

## **8. Complaints**

The Trust will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful (or potentially unlawful) discrimination. Any complaints will be investigated in accordance with the academy's grievance or complaints policy, whichever is appropriate.