

AQUINAS Church of England Education Trust

"Life - Transforming - Learning"

Policy Title:	EQUALITY
Responsibility:	CEO
Review Body:	Board of Trustees
Date:	September 2020
Review:	September 2021

Equality and accessibility of opportunity for all are the overarching principles of the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust's (the Trust) vision of Life Transforming Learning. The Trust is committed to mutual support and respect in pursuit of educational excellence and acknowledges the diverse backgrounds of the Trust's stakeholders. The Trust's values, which are the foundation of the operations of each academy, establish the commitment to:

- Recognising and realising the God given potential of every member of the Aquinas family.
- Discovering, developing and nurturing the talent of all through a holistic education.
- The expectation of excellence in teaching and leadership as the foundation of effective learning.
- Learning from and growing through the rich diversity of backgrounds and beliefs represented in this family.
- Creating environments that promote equity, respect diversity and challenge disadvantage.
- Partnering with the wider community to encourage all to flourish.

The Trust has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance in relation to equality including, but not limited to, the following:

- Admissions Code 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

This policy also has due regard for non-statutory guidance, including the following:

- DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act 2010 and schools'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following:

Trust Policies

- Complaints
- Recruitment
- Special Educational Needs and Disability
- Whistleblowing

Academy Policies

- Accessibility Plan

- Admissions
- Anti-Bullying
- Behaviour Management
- Complaints
- Special Educational Needs and Disability

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) provides a single legal framework with three broad general duties:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

The Trust fully understands the principles of the Act and the work needed to ensure that those with protected characteristics are not discriminated against and are given equal opportunities.

Protected characteristics, under the Act, are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Race, colour, nationality or ethnicity
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Maternity and pregnancy
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

The Act makes it unlawful for the Trust, as the responsible body under the Act, to discriminate against, harass or victimise an individual on the basis of a characteristic protected by the Act. The Trust acknowledges this requirement and will take steps to prevent discrimination, harassment or victimisation in relation to its operations or that of an academy.

Specifically, due regard is to be given within operations of the Trust and its academies to the removal or minimisation of disadvantages. The taking of steps to meet different needs of staff, learners and parents and encourage participation when it is proportionately low be it in relation to staff, learners or parents, will be an important consideration.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires all public bodies, and therefore the Trust, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the following objectives:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Consequently, the Trust and its academies will have due regard to these objectives when making decisions or taking action and will consider and assess the implications of the decisions and actions for people with particular protected characteristics.

We also welcome our specific duties to publish information about our Trust community; to explain how we have due regard for equality; and to publish equality objectives which show how we plan to tackle particular inequalities or disadvantages.

(A person's age is a protected characteristic in relation to employment and services, but does not apply to learners in academies.)

THE TRUST'S EQUALITIES STATEMENT

This statement has been developed with the Trust's Christian values and principles as its basis. All employees are required to support the Christian ethos of the Trust in their professional life, in the tradition of the Church of England when employed to work at a Church of England designated academy. Recruitment policies reflect the requirement as the law allows and admissions policies are formulated in accordance with the Code of Practice for Admissions, applying those criteria for faith schools, where appropriate.

The entitlement to develop, learn and work in an environment free from discrimination is implicit in the Trust's Christian ethos, the core of which is the ultimate worth and dignity of every human. Central to the Trust's mission is the promotion and understanding of human diversity in the community which is positive and celebrated. No member of the Trust community shall suffer unfair direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.

Allegations of victimisation or harassment associated with discrimination shall be investigated and pursued in line with the Trust's grievance and discipline policies. All individuals are encouraged to report any such allegations with reference to the Trust's Whistleblowing policy.

The Trust recognises that in some cases it may be necessary to put in place more favourable treatment for some individuals or groups in the interests of securing sustainable equality or access and opportunity. This is particularly the case in relation to those members of the Trust community who suffer from a disability and reasonable adjustments need to be made to support their access to equality of opportunity and treatment.

The assurance of equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination must permeate all aspects of Trust life, including:

- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Behaviour and sanctions
- Learner rewards
- Advice and guidance
- Personal development and pastoral care
- Extra-curricular opportunities and participation
- Admissions and attendance
- Curriculum delivery and options
- Recruitment, promotion and professional development
- Partnerships with stakeholders including parents, volunteers, contractors and the wider community

Equal opportunities are not about treating everybody the same. It is about meeting people's individual needs and appreciating their individual strengths and gifts. Everyone is different and all should be equally valued.

AIMS

- We aim to integrate the PSED in the organisational life of the Trust with the equality implications of significant decisions being reviewed.
- The review and analysis necessary to comply with the PSED will be carried out seriously, rigorously and with an open mind.
- Policies, practices and processes of the Trust and its academies will not discriminate.

- We aim to offer an education appropriate to each individual learner's needs. The Trust will promote disability equality, ensuring equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful discrimination and disability-related harassment and encouraging participation by disabled people in public life.
- Positive action must be taken in relation to learners with special educational needs and disabilities to enable them to have equal access to educational opportunities and to reach levels of attainment appropriate to their ability.
- To encourage our learners to value their own cultural heritage and the culture and lifestyles of others, and to show respect for self and others while at the same time finding common ground to talk to one another and valuing living together in a community.
- To ensure that every member of staff accepts responsibility for establishing a reasonable environment for debate and extending opportunities for controversial discussion. They will address widely held misconceptions to avoid the risk of learners with limited experience arriving at consensus views of doubtful validity.
- To ensure the provision of genuine equality of opportunity is inherent in the education the Trust offers with all learners having access to benefits, facilities or services.
- The curriculum opportunities must be open to all and post-16 provision must give access to all subjects for all learners regardless of gender or sexual orientation.
- All learners will be treated equitably in relation to admission to an academy in accordance with admissions legislation. The Trust will promote gender equality by eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment, and promote the equality of opportunity between men, women, girls and boys. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'transgender' refers to an individual whose gender expression or identity is different from that traditionally associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- The Trust will challenge any gender stereotyping, which leads to constraints on the development of learners' abilities and aspirations and should include the opportunity to study multicultural issues as an intrinsic part of all programmes and teaching. The Trust will promote race equality and have due regard to eliminating unlawful racial discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups.
- The Trust will demonstrate the unacceptability of attitudes, incidents, taunts or remarks that give offence, intimidate, devalue another's view or opinion, or undermine another's self-esteem.
- We aim to ensure that everyone at our Trust academies, (staff, learners, parents, carers, contractors and visitors) are afforded the basic rights of freedom and access to opportunity, including freedom from all forms of harassment or bullying.
- We aim to ensure that active encouragement is given to all learners in order to enable them to develop fully their talents and personal skills for co-operative interaction and academic excellence. No one person has the right to deny another person his or her educational opportunity.
- We regard all our learners as being of equal value and will ensure that the needs of all learners are identified and met, and that they are able to achieve their full potential, helping to raise standards across the Trust.
- We aim to challenge in a positive way any form of prejudice, whether overt or covert, which contradicts the PSED. This means adopting a consistent and unambiguous stand, from which we strive to overcome prejudice and ensure equality of opportunity for all, thus protecting the rights and liberties of every individual.
- The Trust and its academies promote equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants regardless of backgrounds, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, ethnicity, marital or maternity status or disability in support of the Act and PSED.
- We aim to create and retain a workforce that is valued for its diverse contributions and represents different perspectives, ethnic backgrounds, experience and skills. To achieve this, the Trust will maintain strong community/parental links and Aquinas Advisory Councils will give support to their academies and its stakeholders, to ensure an effective educational delivery.
- Where contractors are working on site, measures will be taken to ensure, as far as possible, that their employees operate according to the Trust's equal opportunities policies.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trust Board

Through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the headteacher of each academy (reference to headteacher being references to Executive Headteachers, Headteachers and Heads of School, as appropriate), the Trust Board is responsible for:

- Agreeing this policy and the Trust's equality objectives.
- Agreeing the Trust's action plan for integrating and delivering the requirements of the PSED
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and the Trust's compliance with the Act and PSED.
- Hold the CEO and headteachers of the academies accountable for delivering and implementing policies and procedures which are compliant with the Act and the PSED thereby creating a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion.

The CEO has delegated responsibility from the Trust Board to:

- Direct the implementation of this policy and the equality, diversity and inclusivity action plan across the Trust by requiring implementation by headteachers at each academy.
- Promote the Trust's vision and values.
- Integrate the PSED across the Trust.
- Ensure that this policy and the equality objectives are available to all staff and staff have access to the necessary training to support delivery.
- Ensure that all Trust policies and practices are compliant with the Act and promote the PSED and all role descriptions include a commitment to equality and diversity as part of their specifications.
- Create a Trust wide Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Working Group to support the integration of the PSED.
- Review policies and practice as a result of the recommendation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Working Group and consider possible revisions.
- Hold headteachers to account in relation to the implementation of this policy and the requirements of the PSED at their respective academy.
- Ensure learners are not discriminated against in the provision of education or the services offered to learners in relation to their education.
- Direct the preparation of the annual equality information including relevant data for staff and learners.
- Incorporate equality considerations into the Trust Action Plan and Academy Improvement Plan to ensure all individuals and groups, regardless of race, gender, disability or other factors achieve their potential and make good progress.

Headteacher

The headteacher of each academy is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy and the equality action plan at their academy.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibility and are appropriately trained in the requirements of the Act, the PSED and what it means in practical terms in relation to the operations of the academy.
- Ensuring all academy policies and procedures are compliant with the requirements of the Act and PSED is integrity into the life of the academy.
- Ensuring that the academy improvement plan includes the necessary equality objectives and major academy decisions involve consideration of the equality impact.
- Actively challenging discriminatory practice, harassment, bullying or victimisation in relation to the protected characteristic of an individual and taking the appropriate action to eliminate it. Appoint an equality, diversity and inclusivity champion for the academy from the staff body who will represent the academy on the Trust wide Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Working Group.

All staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Treating each other and all learners with respect.

- Examining the ideas and images in books and other resources and will challenge negative images and give all learners positive images.
- Ensuring that displays, notices, meals, etc. in the academy reflect its multi-racial population.
- Attending in-service training courses on equal opportunities. Staff will be expected to make every effort to understand the origins and nature of racism, disability, sexism and other forms of prejudice to recognise their own prejudice where it exists and dispel those of learners at the academy.
- Encouraging the teaching and/or use of community languages.
- Forging positive links with the homes of learners and their communities and with colleagues.
- Preventing and dealing with discriminatory behaviour, abuse, bullying and intimidation. Dealing with 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 equal opportunities positive attitudes 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.
- Being aware of the importance of equality and fairness as a staff body, and drawing attention to any areas or events which may cause concern.

Staff with specific responsibilities

- The member of staff responsible for equality, diversity and inclusion at the academy is responsible for coordinating work on equality across the academy.
- The member of staff responsible for the curriculum in each academy is responsible for ensuring that learner curriculum choices and learner attainment and progress do not reveal any embedded stereotyping or discrimination.
- The person with responsibility for extra-curricular activities will monitor participation by minority groups.
- The member of staff responsible for staff development is responsible for monitoring access to and participation in staff development with equalities in mind.

Learners

- All learners should treat each other and staff with respect.
- All learners are valued for themselves and can expect to have their culture and language treated positively and with respect.
- Learners will be given the opportunity in the classroom to discuss and to identify and understand all forms of prejudice.
- Learners will have the opportunity to be involved in anti-bullying work and be able to contribute to the development of equal opportunities at the academy.
- If learners feel they have been abused or bullied they should report the matter immediately to their teacher/learning director/year co-ordinator/deputy/assistant headteacher (as appropriate). All learners can expect to be listened to and have their complaints investigated. If a learner feels their complaint has not been properly dealt with they may take the matter to the headteacher.
- Learners who have suffered discriminatory behaviour, abuse, bullying or intimidation will be supported by the academy and in particular by their teacher/tutor/learning director (as appropriate). Anyone who has committed such offences will be dealt with appropriately – in the case of learners this may include exclusion from the academy.
- Abide by the Trust's equality policy and processes initiated at each academy to integrate the PSED.

Parents/carers, visitors and contractors

- Parents/carers are very important in the life of the Trust and each academy and they have much to contribute to supporting their children in creating a non-discriminatory environment. Parents/carers are asked to support this policy and the Trust's quality objectives.
- Each academy will discuss with parents/carers any incidents of discrimination, abuse or bullying and harassment incidents in which their sons or daughters have been involved.

- If parents/carers are aware of incidents of discrimination, abuse, bullying or harassment then they should contact their child's teacher/tutor/learning director/year co-ordinator/senior member of staff (as appropriate).
- Any visitors or contract staff visiting or working at an academy who become aware of any incidents of discrimination, abuse, bullying or harassment should report them to the Headteacher or a senior member of staff.
- Visitors and contractors are responsible for knowing and following this policy.

Information

- Pastoral leaders will ensure that all learners will receive the information that they need on how to stay safe and make informed choices, especially those groups with protected characteristics.
- The IT department should ensure that internet filters do not block information about protected groups, e.g. about mental health issues, or lesbian, gay and bisexual issues.
- Each academy will proactively communicate information to parents and carers about the work it is undertaking on equality issues including tackling homophobia, racial incidents, disability and mental health issues.
- The Trust will publicise its ethos and belief that all young people are unique and entitled to live freely and make their own choices, i.e. to be themselves.

IMPLEMENTATION

- All of the Trust's policies and procedures will reflect the principles outlined in this policy.
- The Trust will operate the policy in respect of all staff appointments and promotions and will monitor age, gender and ethnicity balance.
- All subject teaching and pastoral programmes of study will take into account the objectives and guidelines within this policy.
- Information will be collected about learners' performance and progress in all areas of activity, including racial groupings, to analyse trends that could have an adverse impact on learners' attainment.

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 (including language and cultural needs).
- Student behaviour, discipline, punishment and reward.
- Exclusions (fixed term and permanent).
- Staff recruitment and career development.
- Membership of AACs.
- Parental involvement.
- Working with the community.
- Support, advice and guidance given by teachers/tutors/learning directors/mentors/counsellors (as appropriate).

All contraventions of this policy will be treated as disciplinary matters.

PUTTING THE EQUALITIES POLICY INTO PRACTICE

Staff will receive training on equality and the removal of discriminatory practices which may lead to the harassment or victimisation of an individual. This policy will be made available to staff and published on the Trust's website for review by learners, parents and the wider community. Any breaches of this policy will be treated with gravity and dealt with via normal disciplinary procedures.

The Trust and its academies will regularly review policies and practices. Equality information will be collected for the purpose of identifying key issues, assessing performance against the PSED and taking action to improve equality and anti-discrimination practice. This information, together any relevant data, will be published annually by the Trust.

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). The Trust complies with the requirements of the GDPR as detailed in the Trust Data Protection Policy.

All staff are aware of the principles of data protection and will not process personal data unless necessary. The Trust safeguards the personal data it collects through the operation of the Trust's data protection policy and processes, and the IT Policy. In addition, the Trust has taken steps to ensure that all its contracts that process data have the GDPR compliant provisions.

EVALUATION

The Trust Board will review the equality objectives every 4 years and annually evaluate the Trust's progress towards achieving the PSED. Evidence from the Trust's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Working Group will be sought to confirm that this policy is promoted effectively to all stakeholders, ensuring that staff, learners and parents understand and meet their responsibilities. The effectiveness of the policy will be confirmed by its impact upon the raising of all learners' levels of attainment, together with an increased inclusive atmosphere for all stakeholders and towards particular goals such as maintaining the gender/disability/racial balance within the staffing establishment, including at senior level.

Additionally, this policy will be monitored in line with our practice for the monitoring and review of all policies, to ensure its effectiveness through each academy's self-evaluation processes.