



The Oak Partnership

Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy

We are committed to safeguarding and ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all pupils in accordance with safeguarding procedures and guidance for staff outlined in the schools' Health and Safety, Child Protection, Security and Safeguarding policies.

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Equality and Equal Opportunities

1. Introduction

The Oak Partnership is committed to encouraging and achieving a working environment which is underpinned by fairness to all individuals, where equality and diversity is recognised, encouraged and valued, and the concept of individual responsibility is accepted by all of our school community. Oak aims to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which individuality is embraced, all forms of discrimination are opposed and where all those connected to the Trust feel proud of their identity and are able to participate fully in school life.

The guiding principles in this policy are equally applicable to pupils, staff, visitors, parents/carers, governors and trustees.

2. Aims of the policy

The Equality and equal opportunities policy brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including all those that we had previously for race, gender and disability. It covers discrimination on the basis of the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion and/or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- transgendered and transsexual people
- those of faith and of no faith
- in relation to their social class or medical condition
- people who work part-time
- as set out in the Equality Act (2010), Human Rights Act 1998 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment on grounds of the above.

Direct discrimination is where someone is treated less favourably due to one (or more) protected characteristics. It can be intentional or unintentional discrimination. Occasionally the discrimination may occur due to a protected characteristic of another person, so the discrimination may be because of association. An example is an advert for a job that requires 'men only' or 'under 30s only'.

Indirect discrimination is where someone is disadvantaged by an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice (PCP) that is applied 'across the board' or 'equally across a particular group'. The PCP may have the consequence (usually unintended) of causing a disadvantage, which then actually affects somebody. For example, a PCP relating to clothing or headwear could be applied 'equally', but may cause someone with a protected characteristic to be disadvantaged.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

It is also unlawful to discriminate unjustifiably on grounds of disability or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to employment caused by disability.

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3. Purpose

The policy sets out the Oak Partnership commitment to equal opportunities and demonstrates due regard for the Public Sector Equality Duty (April 2011).

The Oak Partnership aims to promote an inclusive culture and working environment which demonstrates a strong commitment to fairness and equality in everything it does, aiming to advance equality of opportunity and fosters good relationships for all. An environment where we:

- endeavour to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect
- work hard to make sure that all trust premises provide a safe and secure environment for everyone
- recognise that people have different needs and we understand that treating people equally does not always involve treating people exactly the same
- recognise that for some pupils', extra support is needed to help them to achieve and be successful
- aim to ensure that no one experiences harassment, less favourable treatment or discrimination because of their protected characteristic
- work hard to ensure the diversity of all employees is respected and valued
- ensure all employees have the opportunity to receive fair treatment in an environment free from discrimination and harassment
- strive to ensure that opportunities for promotion, training, and continued employment are provided to all staff based on merit and ability in relation the role criteria.
- ensure that we do not disadvantage employees or job applicants by requirements that cannot be shown to be relevant to the job they applied for or hold
- provide help and encouragement to allow all employees to develop their full potential
- will not tolerate any form of intimidation, bullying or harassment

4. Equality Objectives 2024-2027

The Oak Partnership will continue to monitor and assess its processes, to ensure it continues to promote equality of opportunity for all.

To demonstrate this commitment, we have developed the following equality objectives which will help us take forward equality and diversity matters as an educator and employer. These equality objectives are woven into our strategic plan :

- **to use performance data to monitor pupil achievement and respond to variations between groups of pupils, subjects, key stages, trends over time and comparisons with other schools**
- **to raise the awareness and skills of staff to promote fairness, equality and good relations in the context of their role through a robust appraisal process**
- **to provide an environment that welcomes, protects and respects diverse people**

These will be reviewed regularly, during which we will also assess the progress the Oak Partnership is making in relation to:

- eliminating discrimination
- improving equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics
- consulting and involving those affected by inequality in the decisions our schools take to promote equality and eliminate discrimination (affected people could include parents, pupils, staff and members of the local community)

5. Accessibility

This should be read in conjunction with the trust's SEND policy and Accessibility plan.

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6. Mainstreaming equality into policy and practice

Whilst the Oak Partnership operates equality of opportunity in its day to day practice, which is highlighted throughout this policy, specific actions are set out in the school improvement plans and school evaluation frameworks. The following are the actions we will undertake to support this.

6.1 Teaching and Learning

- use contextual data to improve the ways in which we provide support to individuals and groups of pupils
- monitor achievement data by ethnicity, gender and disability and action any gaps
- take account of the achievement of all pupils when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets
- ensure equality of access for all pupils and prepare them for life in a diverse society
- use materials that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender and disability, without stereotyping.
- promote attitudes and values that will challenge racist and other discriminatory behaviour or prejudice.
- provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures
- seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education
- encourage classroom and staffroom discussion of equality issues which reflect social stereotypes, expectations, and the impact on learning
- Include teaching and classroom based approaches appropriate for the whole school population which are inclusive and reflective of our pupils
- Seek to involve the community around the schools in the celebration and raising awareness of cultural issues

Additionally, the Oak Partnership recognises the importance of and will work narrowing gaps in achievement which affect, amongst others:

- pupils from certain ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- pupils who are supported by the pupil premium
- pupils who are disabled
- pupils who have special educational needs

6.2 Admissions

The trust arrangements are operated in conjunction with the local authority and comply with the requirements of the 2021 [School Admissions Code](#) and the 2012 [School Admission Appeals Code](#) issued, issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The admissions arrangements are fair and transparent and do not discriminate on the protected characteristics or socio-economic factors.

6.3 Behaviour, discipline and exclusion

Fair procedures for managing behaviour and discipline are in place and applied equally to all, regardless of ethnic background, gender, faith, sexuality or disability. There are strategies in place to support pupils who are vulnerable to exclusion because of behavioural difficulties. Permanent exclusions and suspensions will always be undertaken in line with each school's behaviour policy. We will closely monitor exclusions to avoid any potential adverse impact and ensure disproportionate practice is identified and dealt with.

6.4 Parents, governors and community partnership

The Oak Partnership is committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles for all members of its community, parents/carers and governors.

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We encourage parents/carers to support the trust by participating in parents' and carers' consultations and to contact the trust if they have a concern about discrimination.

Governors are encouraged to play an active role in the trust to be able to fulfil their monitoring role.

7. Equal opportunities for staff

The Oak Partnership is committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment. As an employer, we need to ensure that we eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment from our employment practice and advance equality across our workforce.

This policy applies to all aspects of employment from the advertisement of jobs, recruitment, terms and conditions of employment, career development, counselling, training, promotion, grievance and disciplinary procedures, through to reasons for termination of employment.

All staff appointments and promotions will be made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law. However, we are concerned to ensure wherever possible, that the staffing of the schools reflects the diversity of our community.

Equality aspects such as sex, ethnicity, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, and religion and belief are considered when appointing staff and when allocating allowances or re-evaluating staff structures, to ensure decisions are free of discrimination.

The Oak Partnership will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation by or against employees. This includes both direct or indirect forms of discrimination. The Trust will take all reasonable steps to prevent workplace sexual harassment, as required by the ERA 2025, including acting on statutory guidance and future regulations specifying required preventative measures. The Trust is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to prevent harassment by third parties, including parents, contractors, visitors and volunteers.

Any allegations of this nature must be reported to the Oak Partnership HR and will be dealt with without unnecessary delay. Any disclosure made in good faith that relate to sexual harassment will be treated as a protected act under whistleblowing legislation, in accordance with the ERA 2025.

At the end of this process, any employee found to be discriminating against or harassing another, may be dealt with via the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and dependent upon the circumstances, this could lead to dismissal.

In situations where following investigation, the complaint or allegation is found to have been made maliciously, with no basis in fact and is purely an attempt to damage the alleged harasser in some way, disciplinary action may be taken against the person making the complaint or allegation, and dependent upon the circumstances, this could lead to dismissal

8. Roles and responsibilities

We expect all members of the school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this. Specific responsibilities are outlined below:

8.1 The trust board

The Oak Partnership trust board sets out its commitment to equal opportunities in this policy and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that the trust is fully inclusive for pupils and staff and responsive to their needs.

They will ensure that the trust complies with all relevant equalities legislation. They will involve and engage all members of the trust community to support the Oak Partnership's commitment to promoting equality and meeting the core aims and values under this policy.

The Oak Partnership trust board seeks to ensure that people are not discriminated against when applying for jobs at our schools or central locations on grounds of the protected characteristics and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school environments provide safe

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accommodation for all, allow access for people with disabilities and strive to make communications as inclusive as possible for parents, carers and pupils.

8.2 The local governing body

The local governing body, alongside the headteacher and leadership team, will work with all its partners to be proactive in promoting equal opportunities, fostering good relations and in tackling unlawful discrimination. They will encourage support and enable all pupils and staff from all protected characteristics to reach the highest standards possible.

In partnership with the headteacher, the local governing body will ensure that the policy and its related procedures and strategies are implemented.

8.3 The headteacher or central team leader

Have overall responsibility for the internal organisation, control and management of the policy in their school or central location. This includes responsibility for:

- co-operating with any measures introduced by the Oak Partnership in relation to equal opportunities
- managing their employees in a way which is consistent with this policy
- setting a good example and ensuring all employees understand the standards expected from them
- following agreed procedures
- dealing firmly with breaches
- implementing the policy and ensuring the policy and its procedures are followed.
- producing regular information for staff and governors about how the policy is working and providing training for them on the policy if necessary.
- making sure all staff know their responsibilities and receive training and support in carrying out their responsibilities.
- making sure the Equality Policy is regularly monitored and reviewed.
- recording and reporting any breaches of policy and analysing associated data.

8.4 Staff

Everyone has individual responsibility for:

- co-operating with any measures introduced by the Oak Partnership in relation to equal opportunities
- treating colleagues and others (including pupils, visitors, contractors etc) with respect and in ways which are consistent with this policy
- challenging and reporting breaches
- being able to recognise and tackle bias and stereotyping.
- promoting equality and good relations between all groups.
- keeping up to date with the law on discrimination, and taking up training opportunities.
- striving to provide images and lesson plans that show positive images of, and are inclusive of, people with a wide range of protected characteristics

It is recognised that whilst much can be achieved by legislative measures, real progress in improving equality of opportunity in employment can only be achieved with a continuing commitment, in all disciplines and at all levels of employees, and through training that reflects and supports equal opportunities throughout the trust.

9. Links to other policies and documentation

The Oak Partnership will also ensure that information on the responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 is also included in school development plans, self-evaluation, promotional material, websites and newsletters, and the following policies and documents should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

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- Flexible Working Policy
- Appraisal Policy
- Dignity at work policy
- Accessibility plan
- SEND policy
- Admissions policy
- Behaviour policy

10. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the trust board or relevant committee every 2 years, following legislative or procedural change, or following any event that demands retrospective action.