

Equality Policy



FORTIS
Academy

ENRICHING LIVES

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Statement of Intent

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Section 1: Background information

1.1 Background and legislative drivers

Over recent years, schools have (in line with other institutions and public bodies) been working towards an improved understanding of the diverse nature of their communities and recognising their role in promoting an understanding of equality for different groups of people. Much of this work is in response to legislation that places an increased duty on schools and other settings, but it also sits within the specific context of a school's role in providing learning and opportunities for all - it is about fairness, rights and justice.

Equality legislation exists to protect people but also to try and advance equality. Inequality persists in the UK despite 40 years of equality legislation. We know that some groups do less well than their peers in terms of progress, achievement and later life chances. The recognition of diversity and promotion of inclusive and equality practices will help to overcome this disparity.

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises and streamlines legislation that has come before it. The Act refers to **protected characteristics**:

- Age (for staff only)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on public bodies including maintained schools and Academies.

This combined **Equality Duty** came into effect in April 2011. It has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to **have due regard to the need to**:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Having **due regard** means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as outlined above:

- Decision makers in schools must be aware of the duty to have “due regard” when deciding or taking an action which may have implications for people with particular protected characteristics.
- Schools should consider equality before and at the time that they develop policy and take decisions, not as an afterthought, and they need to keep it under review on a continuing basis.
- The equality duty must be integrated into the carrying out of the school’s functions, and the duty must be carried out seriously, rigorously and with an open mind – it is not just a question of ticking boxes.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves considering the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- meet the needs of people with protected characteristics, and
- encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.

Fostering good relations involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

1.2 Specific Duties

The Act also introduced specific duties, which are designed to help public authorities to meet their obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The PSED is set out on the face of the Act, while the specific duties are set out in secondary legislation.

The Specific Duties require schools to:

- Publish information annually to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty
- Publish equality objectives every four years (one or more as is proportionate to the organisation).
- All information must be published in a way that is accessible to the public.

What information to publish or what or how many objectives to set has not been prescribed and will be proportionate to the size of the school; the extent to which its functions affect equality; and the evidence that such objectives are needed. A starting point will be to look at what information you are already publishing and consider whether this gives an accurate picture of progress on equality issues affecting your staff and pupils. Looking at your data and knowing your school community will help you set specific and measurable objectives. Small rural schools may decide to set only one or two objectives.

Schools had to publish their initial information and objectives by 6 April 2012. They must now update the information at least annually and publish objectives at least once every four years.

In the case of Fortis Academy, the objectives relating to students are published in this document. The information relating to adult employees is included in the Shaw Education Trust Equality Objectives, accessible through the Shaw Education Trust website. <https://www.shaw-education.org.uk/our-trust/our-policies.html>

1.3 Guidance for Schools

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the government equalities office have produced several guides to help public bodies including schools to understand their duties in relation to the Act and they can be downloaded from their websites.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00215460/equality-act-2010departmental-advice>

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/guidance-for-educationproviders-schools/>

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equalities/equality-actpublications/equality-act-guidance/specific-duties>

Auxiliary aids and services

Schools should acknowledge their duty to provide auxiliary aids as part of the reasonable adjustment duty for all schools as from September 2012.

Technical guidance is available from the Commission on Equality & Human Rights:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/equalityact-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/>

Section 2: Fortis Academy – A Shaw Education Trust School Equality Policy

2.1 Why we have developed this Equality Policy

This Equality Policy for Fortis Academy brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including those that we had previously for Race, Gender and Disability. It includes all the protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010 as well as other aspects which have the potential to discriminate against or to devalue any individuals within our community. We are further committed to the development of cohesive communities both within our school's physical boundaries and within our local, national and global environments. Our school embraces the aim of working together with others to improve children's educational and wellbeing outcomes, and notes the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our Equality Policy is inclusive of our whole school community – students, staff, parents/carers, visitors, and partner agencies - who we have engaged with and who have been actively involved in and contributed to its development.

The purpose of this Policy is to set out how our practice and policies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between groups.
- It explains how we aim to listen to and involve students, staff, parents, and the community in achieving better outcomes for our children and young people.

2.2 Overall aims of our Equality Policy

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- To promote equality of access and opportunity within our school and within our wider community.
- To promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, genders, sexual orientation, cultures, faiths, abilities and ethnic origins.
- To ensure that equality and inclusive practice are embedded across all aspects of school life the Equality Policy refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes recognition of a range of educational, wellbeing, and material outcomes.

<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

2.3 Our approach

We seek to embed equality of access, opportunity and outcome for all members of our school community, within all aspects of school life.

We actively seek out opportunities to embrace the following key concepts:

Shared Humanity. Identifying commonality and shared values, aspirations and needs underpins our approach to equality. We value our fundamental similarities and universality.

Valuing difference and diversity. We appreciate the richness within our differences and look for ways of celebrating and understanding them better.

Interdependence, interaction and influence. We recognise that, as they evolve, distinct cultures, beliefs and lifestyles will impact on and inform each other.

Social cohesion within our school and within our local community.

Excellence. We aim to inspire and recognise high personal and collective achievement throughout our community, the UK and the wider world.

Personal and cultural identity. We will provide opportunities to explore and value the complexity of our personal and cultural identities.

Fairness and social justice. We will develop our understanding of the inequality that exists in society and explore ways of individually and collectively promoting a more equitable society

2.4 Our vision statement about Equality

Fortis Academy seeks to foster warm, welcoming and respectful environments, which allow us to question and challenge discrimination and inequality, resolve conflicts peacefully and work and learn free from harassment and violence.

We recognise that there are similarities and differences between individuals and groups, but we will strive to ensure that our differences do not become barriers to participation, access and learning and to create inclusive processes and practices, where the varying needs of individuals and groups are identified and met. We therefore cannot achieve equality for all by treating everyone the same.

We will build on our similarities and seek enrichment from our differences and so promote understanding and learning between and towards others to create cohesive communities.

The Fortis Academy mission is Enriching Lives. We set no boundaries on the scope of this mission.

2.5 Our duties

We recognise and accept our equality duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and have sought to involve the whole school community in the process in order to ensure better outcomes for all. Assemblies about themes related to Equality feature termly in the assembly rota, for example National Anti-Bullying week and a series of assemblies about discriminatory bullying. Our policy runs alongside our Code of Conduct and Behaviour Policies. Every measure was taken for the launch of the Policy to be publicised in an inclusive manner. We have due regard to the need to ensure that persons with a protected characteristic are not disproportionately, negatively impacted as a result of our decision or policy making. We positively foster good relations between different groups of students and the wider school community. The policy is reviewed annually, and our objectives updated.

We will consider whether to provide auxiliary aids that are directly related to disabled children's educational needs as a reasonable adjustment, particularly where the child is not provided for under an EHC Plan, or where the statement does not provide the auxiliary aid or service.

We are also guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We will ensure we identify opportunities for promoting our vision, the key concepts and our duties on equality legislation across all aspects of school life, including the provision of extended services.

These opportunities are likely to include all or some of the following, dependent on our current priorities.

- the engagement, participation and involvement of a broad and diverse range of children, young people, their parents and partner agencies
- preparation for entry to the school
- school policies
- breaks and lunchtimes
- the provision of school meals
- interaction with peers
- opportunities for assessment and accreditation
- exam arrangements
- behaviour management approach and sanctions
- exclusion procedures
- school clubs, activities and school trips
- the school's arrangements for working with other agencies
- preparation of pupils for the next phase of education
- learning and teaching and the planned curriculum
- classroom organisation
- timetabling
- grouping of pupils
- homework
- access to school facilities
- activities to enrich the curriculum, for example, a visitor to the school or a theatre group.
- school sports
- employees' and staff welfare

2.6 The roles and responsibilities within our school community

2.6.1 *Our Headteacher will:*

- ensure that staff, parents/carers, students and visitors and contractors are engaged in the development of and informed about the Equality Policy
- oversee the effective implementation of the policy
- ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement the policy
- develop partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that the school's actions are in line with the best advice available
- monitor the policy and report to the Academy Council/IEB at least annually on the effectiveness of the policy and publish this information
- ensure that the Senior Leadership team is kept up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it

2.6.2 *Our Academy Council/IEB will:*

- designate an Academy Council Member/IEB member with specific responsibility for the Equality Policy.
- ensure that the objectives arising from the policy are part of the school's Improvement Plan
- support the Headteacher in implementing any actions necessary.

- engage with parents and partner agencies about the policy.
- evaluate and review the policy annually and the objectives every 4 years.

2.6.3 Our Senior Leadership Team will:

- have responsibility for supporting other staff in implementing this Policy
- provide a lead in the dissemination of information relating to the Policy
- with the Headteacher, provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues assist in implementing reviews of this policy as detailed in the RAP.

2.6.4 Our students will:

- be involved in the development of the Policy and will understand how it relates to them, appropriate to age and ability
- be expected to act in accordance with the Policy be encouraged to actively support the Policy.
- be informed annually about aspects of the Equality Act e.g. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Regulation in 2018.

2.6.5 Our parents/carers will:

- be given accessible opportunities to become involved in the development of the Policy.
- have access to the Policy through a range of different media appropriate to their requirements.
- be encouraged to actively support the Policy.
- be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy.
- be informed of any incident related to this Policy which could directly affect their child.

2.6.6 Our school staff will:

- be involved in the development of the Policy.
- be fully aware of the Equality Policy and how it relates to them.
- understand that this is a whole school issue and support the Equality Policy.
- make known any queries or training requirements.

2.6.7 Relevant voluntary or community groups and partner agencies will:

- Be involved in the development of the Policy
- Be encouraged to support the Policy
- Be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy.

2.7 How we developed our Policy - Participation and Involvement

The development of this policy has involved the whole of our school community. We've involved and listened to what they have to say, including people from broad and diverse backgrounds and of different abilities, taking account of all the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010.

2.7.1 Our students

- SLT regularly interview teams of students about specific areas of school provision as part of subject reviews and student council. Vulnerable students (SEN, Looked After Children etc.) have additional time spent preparing for their review meetings and PEP meetings discussing their expectations. These review meetings take place within statutory recommendations.
- Children with Individual Health Care Plans have an annual review of their plans with the Designated DSL and / or HOY and carry a card that outlines their individual support strategies.
- Heads of Year draw up PSPs (Pastoral Support Plans) and ILSPs (Individual Learning Support Plans) and use EHAs (Early Help Assessments) with children that require additional support, involving their parents and carers.
- Student Leaders have a strong voice in school, actively making suggestions to improve equality of provision, are involved in choosing charitable organisations to support and liaising with younger students including Key Stage 2 students from our partner schools to further encourage pupil involvement in decision making.
- All sub-groups of pupils are represented on Student Voice Panels during work scrutiny and the evaluation of learning and teaching.
- The Equality Experts group of students work closely with the staff to raise the profile of the need to celebrate and protect the diversity within the school.

2.7.2 How we developed our Policy - Using information

In addition, we know our school well because we regularly collect information about ourselves in a variety of ways and other people help us to do this. We use assessment information, internal data on Exclusions, the bullying log and our online reporting portal My Concern to inform us about patterns of behaviour and identifying vulnerable groups in our school community.

We also value more qualitative information which may be given to us through student/learner voice mechanisms, less formally or even anonymously.

The Local Authority provides us with a range of services which support the equality agenda and helps us to identify our strengths and those areas requiring action.

We have established good links with our local and our wider community, including the local police. We welcome them into our school. From them, we learn about equality issues outside school and can establish mechanisms for addressing them within school.

By listening to those within our community, especially our young people, and to our partners, we can identify new areas of work, improve existing approaches and focus our energy where it is required. Assemblies and Personal Development Enrichment Days are an important opportunity for inclusivity.

2.7.3 Our Staff

We comply fully with legislation which protects our staff (including teachers, teaching assistants, supervisors and student teachers) from discrimination based on the protected characteristics. Regarding disability, we make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a disabled person being at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with people who are not disabled.

This includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, training and employment practices (such as dress codes) and disciplinary procedures. We make efforts to ensure that the diversity of our workforce reflects that of our local community and

wider society. In accordance with the Equality Act we do not enquire about the health of an applicant until a job offer has been made or require job applicants to complete a generic 'all encompassing' health questionnaire as part of the application procedure.

We will ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and take seriously and act on incidents of harassment and discrimination recognising that our staff may be either victims or perpetrators.

We interpret our duties positively; take the necessary actions to remove barriers to inclusion and work hard to ensure a safe, positive and inclusive environment. The building is accessible by wheelchair users in many parts, and arrangements are made to rooming schedules to allow students with mobility issues to access all learning.

Our staff team have undertaken training to help them understand their equality duties/and or the differing needs of protected groups within our school community. We have mechanisms in place to identify areas for development.

Unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work - for example ensuring that applicants for a PE teaching post have the physical capability to carry out the duties.

2.7.4 Responding to hate or prejudice-based incidents and bullying

We recognise that hate incidents or prejudice-based bullying behaviour is driven by negative assumptions, stereotypes, or misinformation. These are then directed against an individual or group, based on difference (real or perceived), and linked to, for example, racism, homophobia, negative views of disabled people or sexism. We will take action to prevent, challenge and eliminate any such behaviour.

We recognise that we as individuals and society often struggle with difference of any kind (perceived or actual), which can result in seizing upon the most visible sign of difference e.g. skin colour or disability.

Through our school ethos and curriculum, we want our students to understand better the diversity that exists in society. We want to provide opportunities for them to explore the subtleties and complexities in order to prevent and respond to incidents and situations. We will address the experience, understanding and needs of the victim, the perpetrator, bystanders and the wider school community through our actions and responses.

We record all hate incidents and prejudice-based bullying. We will use this information to identify trends and patterns, so that we have approaches in place to provide appropriate responses in terms of support for victims and their families, sanctions and support for perpetrators and their families and education for our children, young people and communities.

Potential hate crimes are reported via My Concern so that patterns can be observed in data collected to identify potential radicalisation and extremism.

2.7.5 Implementation, monitoring and reviewing

This policy was published in September 2022, accessible on the school website. Implementation, monitoring and review are the responsibility of our Senior Leadership Team and our Academy Council/IEB members who have agreed and published this policy which sets out our priorities and supports these with specific and measurable objectives.

We will report annually on the policy and analyse whether our policy and related objectives have furthered the aims of the general equality duty and in particular educational outcomes for all within

our school community with reference to the protected groups. Equality objectives are linked directly to the school development plan.

2.8 Equality Objectives

Using the views of students, parents, staff and community and analysis of the information as outlined above we have set ourselves specific and measurable objectives that will help us achieve the aims of the general equality duty, these will be embedded into the school rapid action plan and feature where relevant in departmental development plans.

2.8.1 Equality Objectives 2022-2023

1. To ensure that the environment and support for pupils with SEND enables them to make highly effective progress and that both disadvantaged and SEND pupils acquire the knowledge and cultural capital that they need to succeed in life (See SEND policy). To tackle prejudice and promote understanding in relation to pupils with disabilities.
2. To continue to enforce the whole school approach of zero tolerance to bullying, including prejudice-based bullying.
3. To raise the profile of the benefits of a diverse and inclusive society.
4. To ensure that high quality Personal Development provision is in place which enhances the curriculum and enriches students' wider understanding of diversity and sexuality.

Appendix A: Key legislation

Equality Act 2010

Harmonises and streamlines existing equality legislation into one Single Act.

The Act protects pupils from discrimination and harassment based on 'protected characteristics':

- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

This relates to:

- prospective pupils
- pupils at the school
- in some limited circumstances, former pupils

The Act also contains positive action provisions which enable schools to take proportionate action to address disadvantage faced by particular pupils. Such action could include targeted provision, resources or putting in place additional or bespoke provision to benefit a particular disadvantaged pupil group.

The Public Sector Equality Duty commenced in April 2011.

There are exceptions to enable single-sex schools to admit only pupils of one sex and for schools with a religious character to enable them to have admissions criteria which give preference to members of their own religion.

For more information:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00215460/equality-act-2010departmental-advice>

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/new-equality-actguidance/>

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/inclusionandlearnersupport/inclusion/equalityanddiversity/a0064570/the-equality-act-2010>