



Equality, Diversity  
and Inclusion  
Strategy 2022-2024



# Our Vision and Values

## Aquinas Vision – Life Transforming Learning

Striving towards life in all its fullness, Aquinas comprises a distinctive and diverse community of academies with a shared purpose and ethos. We are committed to mutual support and respect in pursuit of educational excellence for children and young people, educating the whole person. Whilst we are one trust with one mission, each academy maintains its own unique characteristics and individual identity within the community it serves. Our mission is to ensure that the life chances and educational achievements of all children and young people in our academies are positively transformed because they are part of our trust.

## Aquinas Values

We are committed to:

- Recognising and realising the potential of every member of the Aquinas family;
- Discovering, developing and nurturing the talent of all through a holistic education;
- An 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 and equality, respect diversity and challenge disadvantage;
- Partnering with the wider community to encourage all to flourish;
- Life Transforming Learning.

Everyone in our Trust is unique and brings their own individual perspectives and experiences. We represent different age groups, genders, disabilities, socio-economic backgrounds, race, faiths and beliefs. To gain the benefits of this diversity, we must embed an inclusive culture where everyone feels comfortable voicing their own opinions, ideas and act to prevent any form of discrimination.

We have a trust culture which encourages all of us to be ourselves and to value one another. We acknowledge **intersectionality** in that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. We will look at points of overlap between marginalised groups and aim to offer a more nuanced view that considers how a variety of socio-economic factors contribute to lived experiences and discrimination. We will aim to address any discrimination through our practices throughout our organisation.

An inclusive culture leads to engaged people, a feeling of belonging, being valued, increases productivity, reduces sickness, improves wellbeing and delivers better outcomes. Everyone is valued equally and has a role to play in creating a more inclusive culture and eradicating discrimination.

## Aquinas Approaches

- Provide a highly **effective** education for all learners;
- Sustain a community of highly **efficient** academies.

Both these approaches connect to the experiences of our young people, colleagues and wider community and is underscored by a commitment to inclusion.

## Strategic Pillars

This strategy identifies key aspects of our work which together allows us to take a holistic approach to promoting equality, improving diversity and maximising inclusion.

We have identified six strategic pillars.

### Legal Compliance

- Complying with the Equality Act 2010.
- Complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

### Alignment of Human Resources

- Ensuring policy and practice aligns with the law and the intentions of our strategy;
- Ensuring systems allow all colleagues to contribute to continuing improvement.

### Governance and accountability

- Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded at all levels of the trust;
- Allowing trustees to drive this holistic agenda;
- Providing data driven insight to understand the impact of our work.

### Culture of inclusion

- Tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination;
- Improving inclusion across all protected characteristics;
- Maximising the accessibility of our academies for individuals with disabilities.

### Education, training and awareness

- Embedding ongoing training at all levels of the organisation;
- Growing the equalities, diversity and inclusion agenda through networks;
- Diversify curricula to be inclusive and intersectional.

### Association and recognition

- Considering promotion of a recognised quality mark, or equivalent;
- Aligning with established associations to inform our work;
- Drawing upon trusted resources from outside the organisation.

## Legislative Context – Equality Act 2010

We want not only to achieve compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 but to demonstrate best practice in the education sector.

The Equality Act prohibits:

- Direct Discrimination;
- Indirect Discrimination;
- Harassment;
- Victimisation.

In relation to the ‘protected characteristics’ detailed in the Act:

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

In addition, under the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), public sector organisations have a duty to:

- **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.

Through our accessibility planning, we are committed to:

- Not treat young people with disabilities **less favourably** for reasons related to their disability;
- Make **reasonable adjustments** for young people with disabilities so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage including potential adjustments that may be needed in the future;
- Plan to **increase access to education** for young people with disabilities.

### Specific Duties

- Publish relevant, proportionate information showing compliance with the Equality Duty;
- Publish Equality Objectives every four years;
- Publish Equality Information annually;
- Publish Accessibility Planning;
- Publish Gender Pay Gap.

## Equality Objectives

Our equality objectives are based on our trust culture, analysis of data and other information. They focus on those areas where we have agreed to act to improve equality and tackle disadvantage. We produce an Equality Action Plan that shows how we will achieve our objectives and gives a review of progress as reflected in the Equality Information. We have set the following objectives for the three-year lifespan of this strategy but will review them annually:

- Develop an understanding, awareness and tolerance of different cultures and religious beliefs within the pupil body of the Trust community of schools;
- Close gaps in attainment and achievement between pupils and all groups of pupils; especially boys and girls, students eligible for free-school meals, students with special educational needs and disabilities, looked after children and students from different heritage groups;
- Ensure there is equality of professional opportunity and development within the Trust's employed staff with representation being reflective of groups with protected characteristics;
- Improve accessibility throughout all the Trust's academies for pupils, staff and visitors with disabilities.

## Measures of Success

As public service provider, equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our success. They should also be seen as outcomes which can be measured. As well as recognising where we succeed, we also need to identify where we need to improve.

Our key metrics are:

- Gender balance in workforce and governance structure;
- Representation in workforce and governance structure reflecting pupil population;
- Gender Pay Gap;
- Ethnicity Pay Gap (voluntary);
- Pupil attainment;
- Pupil attendance;
- Pupil exclusion;
- Perceptions from workforce, parent and pupil surveys e.g. Edurio;
- Achieving Inclusion Quality Mark, or equivalent.

Specifically, in relation to our Accessibility Planning:

- Extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum;
- Access to the physical environment of the school;
- Delivery of information to individuals with disabilities.

## Strategic Objective

- Valuing all.

## Strategic Intent

- Deepening a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion.

## Strategic Actions

### Legal Compliance

- Ensure legal compliance and effective reporting;
- Identify and tackle risks in all Trust settings;
- Ensure settings improve equality, diversity and inclusion by delivering against:
  - Equality Objectives;
  - Accessibility Plans.

### Alignment of Human Resources

- Improve representation reflecting pupil population;
- Improve pathways for addressing concerns;
- Address identified pay gaps.

### Governance and accountability

- Embed governance structures to drive improving equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Improve use of data to inform, monitor and review this strategy;
- Effectively communicate our commitment to all stakeholders.

### Culture of inclusion

- Meet the needs of people with protected characteristics;
- Address differential educational outcomes;
- Plan to improve accessibility across the estate.

### Education, training and awareness

- Provide a universal inclusive curriculum to all young people;
- Deliver ongoing training to improve expertise and capacity amongst workforce.

### Association and Recognition

- Attain an institutional award in recognition of our work.

## Implementation

We believe a proactive approach should be taken to achieve our aims through:

- Equality, diversity and inclusion **strategy** and **action plan**;
- Equality, diversity and Inclusion **leads** at each academy;
- Trust level **strategic group** to consider the strategy and action plan, develop it and monitor and review practice;
- **Inclusive language guidance**;
- Annual review of HR statistics in terms of protected characteristics as it relates to recruitment, career progression, performance management and capability. Any resultant review of policy and practice will be undertaken by the HR director and trust lead on EDI;
- **Annual Curriculum Audit** and planning to diversify the curriculum;
- **Annual Pupil Data Review** in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability as it relates to pupil population, attendance, exclusions and attainment;
- **Annual Workforce Data Review** in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability as it relates to workforce demographics and pay gaps;
- Identification and a continuous training program for:
  - All staff in terms of delivering equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to pupils and parents;
  - Understanding discrimination and how to ensure equality and inclusion is put into practice;
  - Following the Trust's strategy and principles, HR policies and procedures;
  - Line managers when dealing with probation, performance management and capability.
- Leaders to:
  - Consider the implications for people with protected characteristics of decisions and actions that are or proposed to be taken;
  - Integrate the PSED into all aspects of school life and their decisions;
  - Review and analyse the steps the school must take to comply with the PSED.
- Links with and input from the pupils and parents.

This strategy will be reviewed annually and updated as required.

**Date:** *January 2022*

**Review date:** *January 2023*

# Appendix

## Legislation

**Disability Discrimination Act 1995** - Protects the rights of all those with disabilities. It also places a duty on schools (and other organisations) to eliminate barriers to ensure that individuals can gain equal access to services.

**Disability Discrimination Act 2005** - Places a duty for schools to produce a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and an Access Plan. Schools must encourage participation in all aspects of school life and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination.

**Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001** - Makes it unlawful for educational providers to discriminate against pupils with a special educational need or a disability.

**Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000** - Outlines the duty of organisations to promote good relationships between people from different races.

**Human Rights Act 1998** - Sets out rights of all individuals and allows them to act against authorities when their rights have been affected.

**Children Act 1989** - Sets out the duty of local authorities (including schools) to provide services according to the needs of children and to ensure their safety and welfare.

**Children Act 2004** - Sets out the duty to provide effective and accessible services for all children and underpins the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes.

**Education Act 1996** - Sets out the school's responsibilities towards children with special educational needs. The Act also requires schools to provide additional resources, equipment and / or additional support to meet their needs.

**Equality Act 2010** - The Act makes it unlawful for the Trust or an academy to discriminate against, harass or victimise any individual on the basis of certain protected characteristics.

**Section 149 of the Act – Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** - The PSED, which came into force in April 2011, under the provisions of s.149 of the Act, 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.

To ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities to publish:

- Equality objectives, at least every four years;
- Information to demonstrate their compliance with the PSED annually.