



**The Acorns School**

# **SINGLE EQUALITIES POLICY & GUIDANCE**

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**Next Review Date:** October 2025

# Single Equalities Policy and Action Plan

## 1. Statement of Principles

This policy outlines the commitment of the staff, pupils and governors of **The Acorns School**, to ensure that equality of opportunity is available to all members of the school community.

### Core Purpose

Ensuring the Acorns School is a place where everyone matters, a place where everyone can enjoy equal and quality life chances and be respected in their communities. Our mission is to provide a safe, secure and attractive environment enabling students to enjoy learning and reach their full potential. We endeavour to deliver an inclusive curriculum, which prepares pupils for reintegration into an appropriate school. Through a positive team approach we facilitate change, work towards desirable outcomes of behaviour and develop self-esteem. This should enable pupils to develop into responsible and caring members of the community.

Corporate Objectives.

The Acorns School is a place where people can: -

- Feel safe
- Lead healthy lives
- Get help if they need it
- Learn and develop
- Work and prosper
- Travel easily and safely
- Enjoy a high quality environment

For our school this means not simply treating everybody the same but understanding and tackling the different barriers which could lead to unequal outcomes for different groups of pupils in school, whilst celebrating and valuing the achievements and strengths of all members of the school community. These include:

- Pupils
- Staff
- Parents/carers
- The governing body
- Multi-agency staff linked to the school
- Visitors to school
- Students on placement

We believe that equality at our school should permeate all aspects of school life and is the responsibility of every member of the school and wider community. Every member of the school community should feel safe, secure, valued and of equal worth.

At **The Acorns School** equality is a key principle for treating all people fairly and creating a society in which everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential - irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or any other recognised area of discrimination or disability, so

**What do we understand by “disability”?** At The Acorns School we promote disability equality and prepare all our young people for life in a diverse society. We use the term ‘disabled’ to refer to someone who has:

A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term, adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Also pupils believe that, ‘equality means being treated the same and that none is given more or less chances than anyone else in class.’

‘The staff promotes equal opportunities for all students extremely well and this is at the heart of the School’s aim of providing a personalised curriculum. All aspects of safeguarding, child protection and safe recruitment of

staff are given the highest priority. This is especially evident in the effectiveness of partnerships with offsite providers.’ Ofsted report 2010

## 2. School in Context

**The Acorns School** caters for students from West Lancashire in key stages 3 and 4 who have been excluded from mainstream schools or who are at risk of exclusion. Students have experienced social, emotional or behavioural problems and some have moderate or specific learning difficulties. An increasing number have been poor attenders at their mainstream schools. Key stage 4 students attend part time at the School and part time with other providers off site. A minority of students are dual registered at mainstream schools and the School. Because of the many transfers of students into and out of the School, student mobility is well above average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is also well above average. Almost all students are of white British heritage. A small number are looked after by the local authority. A few have SEN/ EHCP statements and all have personalised curriculum support plans. The School has achieved Quality Mark status and the Investors in people Bronze award.

For example:

- Currently there are around 80 pupils on the school roll made up of boys and girls
- The ethnic make-up of the pupils registered at the school is predominantly white British
- There are minority ethnic groups represented in the school staff and governing body
- The linguistic profile of the school is also English 1<sup>st</sup> language.
- The school has pupils on roll with a disability.
- The school has staff and governors with a disability
- The school is partially physically inaccessible for wheelchair users
- The particular demographic trend in the local area is reflected in the ethnic make-up in the school is predominantly white British
- There are also Children cared for by the local authority.

## 3. Ethos and Atmosphere

- At **The Acorns School** the leadership of the school community will demonstrate mutual respect between all members of the school community.
- There is an *openness* of atmosphere which welcomes everyone to the school.
- The whole school community will challenge any type of discriminatory and/or bullying behaviour, e.g. through unwanted attentions (verbal or physical), unwelcome or offensive remarks or suggestions.
- All pupils are encouraged to greet visitors to the school with friendliness and respect.
- Displays around the school are of a high quality and reflect diversity across all aspects of equality of opportunity and are frequently monitored and updated. British and community values are inherent.
- Provision is made to cater for the spiritual needs of all the children through, counselling, enrichment programmes both classroom based and externally based activities.

The demographic make up of the school directly reflects that of the local community as being predominantly white British with English as the first (only) language. The religion is also Christianity of a predominantly non practising nature. The socio economic status of the school is also one which falls into the category of single parents, low income status with subsequently a high percentage on FSM's.

## 4 Policy Development

This policy applies to the whole school community. It has been drawn up as a result of the outcomes of a transparent process and through consultation with: members of the whole staff in meetings and briefings, the

pupils in school council sessions, or via the curriculum and explicitly in subjects such as PHSE and also across the whole curriculum in Maths, English, Science, Art, Humanities as indicated by the equality audit.

## 5 Monitoring and Review

**The Acorns School** is an inclusive school, working towards greater equality in the whole school community. We use the curriculum and teaching to enhance the self-esteem of all those it serves and to provide a learning environment in which each individual is encouraged to fulfil her or his potential.

We collect and analyse a range of equality information for our pupils. We make regular assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to track pupils' progress, as they move through the school. As part of this process, we regularly monitor the performance of different groups, to ensure that all groups of pupils are making the best possible progress. We use this information to adjust future teaching and learning plans, as necessary. Resources are available to support groups of pupils where the information suggests that progress is not as good as it should be. The governing body receives regular updates on pupil performance information. School performance information is compared to national data and local authority data where available, to ensure that pupils are making appropriate progress when compared to all schools, and to schools in similar circumstances. As well as monitoring pupil performance information, we also regularly monitor a range of other information. This relates to:

- Attendance
- Exclusions and truancy
- Racism, disabilism, sexism, homophobia and all forms of bullying
- Parental involvement
- Participation in Extended Learning Opportunities

Our monitoring activities enable us to identify any differences in pupil performance and provide specific support as required, including pastoral support. This allows us to take appropriate action to meet the needs of specific groups in order to make necessary improvements.

**The Acorns School** is also committed to providing a working environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation. We aim to recruit an appropriately qualified workforce and establish a governing body that is representative of all sections of the community in order to respect and respond to the diverse needs of our population.

Complaints of bullying or harassment are dealt with swiftly and appropriately through the school's discipline procedure and restorative justice process. The data is analysed for any recurring pattern of ethnicity, disability, gender or free school meals (FSM).

We collect and analyse a range of profile information for our staff and governors:

We have identified the following issues from the analysis of the data:

Pupil's that experienced a disrupted experience of exclusion or involvement with external provision could not be guaranteed the same consistency.

Due regard is given to the promotion of equality in the School Improvement Plan. The person responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the policy and action plan is the Head teacher.

Their role is to:

- Lead discussions, organise training, update staff in staff meetings, support discussions
- Work with the governing body on matters relating to equality
- Support evaluation activities that moderate the impact and success of this policy

## 6 Developing Best Practice

### Learning and Teaching

We aim to provide all our pupils with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement.

To do this, teaching and learning will:

- Provide equality of access for all pupils and prepare them for life in a diverse society
- Use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, without stereotyping
- Use materials to promote a positive image of and attitude towards disability and disabled people
- Promote attitudes and values that will challenge discriminatory behaviour
- Provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and religions and celebrate the diversity of other cultures
- Use a range of sensitive teaching strategies when teaching about different cultural and religious traditions
- Develop pupil's advocacy skills so that they can detect bias, challenge discrimination, leading to justice and equality
- Ensure that the whole curriculum covers issues of equality and diversity;
- All subject leaders' departments, where appropriate, promote and celebrate the contribution of different cultures to the subject matter
- Seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education
- Provide educational visits and extended learning opportunities that involve all pupil groups
- Take account of the performance of all pupils when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets
- Make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of pupils
- Identify resources and training that support staff development

### **Learning Environment**

All pupils are encouraged to improve on their own achievements and not to measure themselves against others. Parents are also encouraged to view their own children's achievements in this light.

- Teacher enthusiasm is a vital factor in achieving a high level of motivation and good results from all pupils
- Adults in the school will provide good, positive role models in their approach to all issues relating to equality of opportunity
- The school should place a very high priority on the provision for special educational needs and disability. We will meet all pupils' learning needs including the more able by carefully assessed and administered programmes of work
- The school must provide an environment in which all pupils have equal access to all facilities and resources
- All pupils are encouraged to be actively involved in their own learning
- A range of teaching methods are to be used throughout the school to ensure that effective learning takes place at all stages for all pupils
- Consideration will be given to the physical learning environment – both internal and external, including displays and signage.

Moreover, we encourage pupils to participate in an Enrichment Programme:

- Ascertaining the individual's social /emotional needs. Wherever possible, staff aim to involve new pupils in activities which involve group-work or working alongside peers.
- The rationale behind this is to encourage the development of social skills and self-esteem.
- Moreover, working in a group setting without the pressure of 'having to achieve' enhances confidence in the ability to learn and accept new challenges.

Subsequently, a positive aspect of the Enrichment Programme is the developing willingness to access the curriculum and participate in learning activities, which was not apparent in previous school settings.

### **Curriculum**

At **The Acorns School** all curriculum policies include equal opportunities statements such as: **Equal Opportunities**

- The School supports equal opportunities by promoting a wide range of cross-curricular areas and seeks

to take advantage of multi-cultural diversity within the subject.

- The teaching will therefore be in accordance with the present policy for Equal Opportunities.
- Be committed in ensuring high achievement by pupils regardless of gender, race, class or disability.
- In accordance with The Disability Discrimination Act 2005, all staff and pupils will have access to all areas; subsequently the Acorns School will overcome any physical feature by providing services by alternative methods.

Also we aim to ensure that:

- Planning reflects our commitment to equality in all subject areas and cross curricular themes promoting positive attitudes to equality and diversity
- Pupils will have opportunities to explore concepts and issues relating to identity and equality
- Steps are taken to ensure that all pupils have access to the mainstream curriculum by taking into account their cultural, backgrounds, linguistic needs and learning styles
- All pupils have access to qualifications which recognise attainment and achievement and promote progression

### **Resources and Materials**

The provision of good quality resources and materials within **The Acorns School** is a high priority. These resources should:

- Reflect the reality of an ethnically, culturally and sexually diverse society
- Reflect a variety of viewpoints
- Show positive images of males and females in society
- Include non-stereotypical images of all groups in a global context
- Be accessible to all members of the school community

### **Language**

We recognise that it is important at **The Acorns School**, that all members of the school community use appropriate language which:

- Does not transmit or confirm stereotypes
- Does not offend
- Creates and enhances positive images of particular groups identified at the beginning of this document
- Creates the conditions for all people to develop their self esteem
- Uses accurate language in referring to particular groups or individuals and challenges in instances where this is not the case

### **Extended Learning Opportunities**

It is the policy of this school to provide equal access to all activities from any age.

We undertake responsibility for making contributions to extended learning opportunities and are aware of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity (e.g. sports helpers, coach drivers) by providing them with written guidelines drawn from this policy.

We try to ensure that all such non-staff members who have contact with children adhere to these guidelines.

### **Provision for Bi-lingual Pupils**

We undertake at **The Acorns School**, to make appropriate provision for all EAL/bi-lingual children/groups to ensure access to the whole curriculum. These groups may include:

- Pupils for whom English is an additional language
- Pupils who are new to the United Kingdom
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children
- Advanced bi-lingual learners
- Use first language effectively for learning

## **Personal Development and Pastoral Guidance**

- Staff take account of gender, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or any other recognised area of discrimination and the experience and needs of particular groups such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, refugee and asylum seeker pupils
- All pupils are encouraged to consider the full range of career opportunities available to them with no discriminatory boundaries placed on them due to their disability, gender, race or sexual orientation (whilst acknowledging that a disability may impose some practical boundaries to some career aspirations)
- All pupils/staff/parents/carers are given support, as appropriate, when they experience discrimination
- We recognise that perpetrators may also be victims and require support.
- Positive role models are used throughout the school to ensure that different groups of pupils can see themselves reflected in the school community
- Emphasis is placed on the value that diversity brings to the school community rather than the challenges.

## **Staffing and Staff Development**

We recognise the need for positive role models and distribution of responsibility among staff.

- This must include pupils' access to a balance of male and female staff at all key stages where possible
- We encourage the career development and aspirations of all school staff
- It is our policy to provide staff with training and development, which will increase awareness of the needs of different groups of pupils
- Access to opportunities for professional development is monitored on equality grounds

## **Staff Recruitment**

- All those involved in recruitment and selection are trained and aware of what they should do to avoid discrimination and ensure equality good practice through the recruitment and selection process
- Equalities policies and practices are covered in all staff inductions
- All temporary staff are made aware of policies and practices
- Employment policy and procedures are reviewed regularly to check conformity with legislation and impact

Note:

Under the Equality Act 2010, in very limited circumstances, an employer can claim that a certain religious denomination or belief is considered to be a genuine occupational requirement of that role. An aided school may be able to rely on this for some roles in school, particularly those roles that provide spiritual leadership. However, this would not apply for all staff in School.

In addition, there are also instances in which a job will qualify for a genuine occupational qualification on the grounds of gender. However, only in very few instances would this be permissible, for example, where the job is likely to involve physical contact with members of the opposite sex, where matters of decency or privacy are involved.

## **Partnerships with Parents/Carers/Families and the Wider Community**

We will work with parents/carers to help all pupils to achieve their potential.

- All parents/carers are encouraged to participate in the full life of the school.
- Setting up, as part of the schools' commitment to equality and diversity, a group made up of all stakeholders of the school community. This has been/will be developed to support the school with matters related to its equalities duties
- Members of the local community are encouraged to join in school activities
- Exploring the possibility of the school having a role to play in supporting new and settled communities

## **7 Roles and Responsibilities**

- Our governing body will ensure that the school complies with statutory requirements in respect of this policy and action plan
- The Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy, and will ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities, that they are given necessary training and support and report progress to the governing body
- The Headteacher has day-to-day responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of this policy
- Our staff will promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in the school, challenge inappropriate language and behaviour, respond appropriately to incidents of discrimination and harassment, ensure appropriate support for children with additional needs and maintain a good level of awareness of equalities issues
- All members of the school community have a responsibility to treat each other and staff with respect, to feel valued, and to speak out if they witness or are subject to any inappropriate language or behaviour
- We will take steps to ensure all visitors to the school adhere to our commitment to equality

## **8 Commissioning and Procurement**

The Acorns School will ensure that we buy services from organisations that comply with equality legislation. This will be a significant factor in any tendering process.

## **9 The Measurement of Impact of the Policy**

This policy will be evaluated and monitored for its impact on pupils, staff, parents and carers from the different groups that make up our school. An action plan will be published to enable an impact assessment to be undertaken at the appropriate time within a given timescale.

## **10 Publicising the Policy and Plan**

Please refer to school website, staff and parent newsletter, induction booklets and distribute to local community and voluntary groups.

## **11 Annual Review of Progress**

The Acorns School has been legally required to report annually on progress and performance in respect of policy covering ethnicity, disability and gender and to report annually on progress to improve access for disabled pupils, including access to the curriculum, physical access and access to information. Taking this single equality approach, we will incorporate all requirements into one annual report which meets the requirements of the new legislation and which will formulate the basis for the annual action plan.

The policy has a life span of three years and therefore it must be reviewed and revised your as part of a three-year cycle.

## **12 Equality Impact Assessments**

Undertaking equality impact assessments (EIAs) is similar to undertaking health and safety risk assessments. It involves predicting and assessing what the implications of a policy, function or strategy will be on a wide range of people.



EIAs were introduced with the Race Equality Duty and are now also required for both disability and gender. It is also best practice to consider age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation as part of this process.

EIAs are a way in which we can analyse all of our work (this could be a policy, procedure, project, strategy or service) to ensure it meets the needs of all our service users and that no group (in relation to ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation) is disadvantaged or cannot access our services.

## **Appendix – Equality Legislation Guidance**

### **What does a school need to do?**

#### **(Note: The duties outlined below are now elements of the Public Sector Equality Duty)**

##### **Race**

The term race includes colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin and citizenship as well as race.

##### **The Race Equality Duty**

###### **What is it?**

- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (which includes the Race Equality Duty) amended the Race Relations Act 1976
- It came into effect from April 2001
  - race relations amendment act 2010

###### **Who is covered?**

- Pupils, parents/carers, prospective pupils and parents/carers, staff, job applicants, governors and others using school facilities

##### **General duties**

- Tackle racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations between persons of different racial groups

##### **Specific duties**

- From May 2002 publish a Race Equality Policy which includes an implementation strategy or action plan (effectively a Race Equality Scheme), monitor it annually and review it every three years
- Involve appropriate and diverse stakeholders in developing the policy
- Monitoring the impact of the school's policies on pupils' performance and progress
- Provide ethnic monitoring data on their staff in regular returns to the Local Authority

##### **Reporting racist incidents in schools**

Schools are required to have in place a procedure for dealing with and reporting racist incidents, which includes providing an annual summary of racist incidents to Lancashire County Council.

## **Disability**

##### **What is a disability?**

- Disability is a physical or mental impairment which has an effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. That effect must be:  
substantial (more than minor or trivial)  
adverse

long-term (it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least a year or for the rest of the life of the person affected).

There is no need for a person to have a specific, medically-diagnosed cause for their impairment – what matters is the effect of the impairment, not the cause.

Examples include hearing or sight impairments, a significant mobility difficulty, mental health conditions or learning difficulties. There are many other types of condition, illness or injury that can result in a person being *disabled* (eg diabetes, asthma, cancer, arthritis, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, heart conditions, facial disfigurement).

### **General duties**

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate disability-related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage disabled people's participation in public life
- Take steps to take into account people's disabilities.

### **Specific duties**

- From December 2006 for secondary schools and from December 2007 for primary schools, special schools and PRUs, must prepare and publish a disability equality scheme, monitor it annually and review it every three years
- Involve disabled people in the development of the scheme
- Set out in their scheme:
  - how disabled people have been involved in its preparation
  - their arrangements for gathering information on the effect of the school's policies on:
    - the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees
    - the educational opportunities available to and the achievements of disabled pupils
    - the school's methods for assessing the impact of its current or proposed policies and practices on disability equality
    - the steps the school is going to take to meet the general duty (the school's action plan)
    - the arrangements for using information to support the review of the action plan and to inform subsequent schemes.

### **GENDER**

The term gender includes boys, girls, men and women, and transgender/transsexual people. Sexual orientation is a distinct protected characteristic. (The term transgender refers to a range of people who do not feel comfortable with their birth gender).

#### **What is the difference between sex and gender?**

- Sex refers to biological status as male or female. It includes physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia.
- Gender is a term that is often used to refer to ways that people act, interact, or feel about themselves, which are associated with boys/men and girls/women. While aspects of biological sex are the same across different cultures, aspects of gender may not be.

### **Sexual Orientation**

**Heterosexism** is any prejudice and discrimination against individuals and groups who are lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) or are perceived to be so. It is based on the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual. Expressions of dislike, contempt or fear based on heterosexism are usually known as **homophobia**, although **lesophobia** and **biphobia** are also coming into use.

Whether through institutional practice or personal behaviour, the prevalence of heterosexism is likely to mean that LGB people feel excluded and unsafe. This effect can be mitigated by an actively welcoming and supportive environment.

**Sexual orientation** is defined as an individual's sexual orientation towards people of the same sex as her or him (gay or lesbian), people of the opposite sex (heterosexual) or people of both sexes (bisexual).

#### **General duties**

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity between male and female pupils and between men and women
- Promote good relations

#### **Specific duties**

- From April 2007, prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme, showing how the school will meet its general and specific duties and set out its gender equality objectives, as well as its plans for stakeholder consultation and impact assessment
- Monitor the scheme annually and review it every three years.

#### **Transgenderism and gender re-assignment**

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from that usually associated with their birth sex. Gender re-assignment is the process a transgender person goes through to change sex.