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Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

#GN19

Last updated: 04 March 2025

Review Date: 31 August 2028

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## **Statement of intent**

Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, all schools have a duty to:

* Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
* Advance equality between different groups.
* Foster good relations between different groups.
* Promote mental health and wellbeing.

TCAT and our schools’ overall values are underpinned by our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. We are dedicated to ensuring that every pupil receives an education that offers them the best chance at fulfilling their potential, and to promoting mental wellbeing amongst our pupils. We are committed to supporting and celebrating all pupils’ individual identities. We have developed this policy to provide a clear framework for how we will achieve this.

Specifically, we aim to:

1. Promote Inclusive Education and Reduce Attainment Gaps

* Ensure that all pupils, regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, disability, or special educational needs (SEN), achieve their full potential
* Identify and address attainment gaps by implementing targeted interventions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils (e.g., Pupil Premium students)
* Monitor progress and adapt teaching strategies to ensure equitable access to learning resources across all schools within TCAT

2. Foster a Culture of Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion

* Embed diversity and inclusion across the curriculum, ensuring that teaching materials and school activities reflect a wide range of cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives
* Deliver anti-discrimination training for staff and pupils to tackle racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and other forms of prejudice
* Implement an effective anti-bullying strategy that specifically addresses issues related to protected characteristics

3. Improve Representation in Leadership and Staffing

* Ensure recruitment and promotion processes promote diversity and reflect the communities that TCAT serves
* Provide career development and leadership opportunities for underrepresented groups within the teaching staff, leadership teams, and governance structures
* Establish mentoring and professional development programmes to support staff from diverse backgrounds to progress into leadership roles

4. Enhance Support for Pupils with SEN and Disabilities

* Ensure equitable access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities for pupils with SEN or disabilities
* Provide training for staff to effectively support pupils with additional needs and promote inclusive teaching strategies
* Improve accessibility across all school sites, ensuring that physical and digital learning environments cater to all pupils' needs

5. Strengthen Community Engagement and Partnerships

* Develop stronger links with parents, carers, and community groups, particularly those from underrepresented or marginalised backgrounds
* Provide opportunities for parents and carers to engage in their child’s education, with particular attention to hard-to-reach families
* Work with external organisations to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in school activities, governance, and decision-making

6. Promote Gender Equality and Challenge Stereotypes

* Ensure equal access to all subjects, activities, and leadership opportunities for both boys and girls
* Challenge gender stereotypes in subject choices, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) and creative arts
* Implement policies and practices to ensure that all pupils feel safe, valued, and respected, regardless of their gender identity or expression

7. Regularly Monitor, Review, and Report on Progress

* Collect and analyse equality data across all schools in the MAT to track progress against objectives
* Ensure pupil voice and stakeholder feedback shape ongoing equality strategies
* Publish an annual report on equality progress, identifying key achievements and areas for improvement

To achieve these objectives, we will adopt the following methods:

* Embedding equality within teaching and resources
* Using key data indicators to understand the needs and characteristics of our school
* Promoting community cohesion
* Promoting parental engagement
* Investing in regular staff training
* Using key data, such as measures of wellbeing, to monitor the progress of pupils with protected characteristics
* Regularly reviewing our policy to ensure it reflects current trends and issues

# Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

* Human Rights Act 1998
* The Equality Act 2010
* UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
* Data Protection Act 2018

This policy has due regard to statutory and good practice guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

* DfE (2014) ‘The Equality Act and schools’
* DfE (2018) ‘Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children’
* DfE (2018) ‘Gender separation in mixed schools’
* DfE (2018) ‘Equality Act 2010: advice for schools’
* DfE (2018) ‘Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools’

This policy operates in conjunction with the following TCAT and school policies:

* Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy (SD3)
* Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy (SG4)
* Attendance Policy Primary (SG29(B))
* Attendance Policy Secondary (SG29(A))
* Primary Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy (RSHE) Policy
* Secondary Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy
* School Uniform Policy (GN3)
* LGBTQ+ Policy (SG18)
* Supporting Pregnant Pupils and School-age Parents Policy (SG41)
* Admissions Policy Trust Level (GN1)
* LAC Policy (SG38)
* Anti-Bullying Policy (SG19)
* Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (SG1)
* Complaints Policy and Procedure (GN9)

# Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board will:

* Be responsible for ensuring TCAT complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations
* Take all reasonable steps to ensure pupils and potential pupils will not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised in relation to:
  + Admissions
  + The way TCAT schools provide an education for pupils
  + How pupils are provided with access to benefits, facilities and services
  + The suspension or exclusion of a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment
* Ensure all policies are developed and implemented with appropriate equality impact assessments informing future plans in collaboration with the Executive Headteacher/CEO and other executive leaders

The Headteacher/CEO, and where delegated, Headteachers/Heads of School will:

* Implement and champion this policy, ensuring that all staff and pupils apply its guidelines fairly in all situations
* Conduct regular training sessions to ensure all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities, as well as to develop their skills and knowledge
* Review and amend this policy, taking into account new legislation and government guidance, and previously reported incidents, in order to improve procedures
* Ensure that appropriate counselling is made available for pupils who require immediate interventions, parental assistance and personal counselling

Staff will:

* Be alert to the possible harassment of pupils, both inside and outside of their school, and to deal with incidents of harassment and/or discrimination as the highest priority
* Carry out their statutory duties relating to equal opportunities and inclusivity, and pertaining to their specific roles
* Have due regard to the sensitivities of all pupils, and not provide material that may cause offence
* Act as a role model for equality, diversity and inclusion across the whole TCAT community

# Protected characteristics

TCAT will not discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of their:

* Sex
* Race
* Disability, which includes mental health, encompassing prejudiced assumptions, attitudes or behaviours related to mental health
* Religion or belief
* Sexual orientation
* Gender reassignment
* Pregnancy or maternity

TCAT will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic related to a person, such as a parent, with whom the pupil or prospective pupil is associated.

TCAT will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic which they are believed to have, even if the belief is mistaken.

# Sex

For the purpose of this policy, sex refers to a pupil’s biological assignment at birth depending on their reproductive organs. TCAT understands that some pupils identify as a gender different to the sex they were assigned at birth, and we will support pupils through their transitioning phases.

TCAT will ensure that pupils of one sex are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to pupils of other sexes.

TCAT will only separate pupils by sex where there is reasonable justification for doing so, or if one of the following applies:

* Pupils will suffer a disadvantage connected to their sex
* One sex has needs that are different from the needs of the other sex
* Participation in an activity by pupils of one sex is disproportionately low

TCAT will consider non-statutory exceptions on a case-by-case basis and regularly review the impact of any separation to ascertain whether it remains lawful.

Pupils will be offered equal opportunities to undertake any activity in any TCAT school, e.g. in relation to technology lessons, all pupils will be allowed to choose which skills they learn.

There may be occasions where we deem it necessary to teach some subjects in single-sex classes, but TCAT will ensure that such classes do not give pupils a disadvantage when compared to pupils of the other sex in other classes. Occasions where pupils are separated to be taught in single-sex classes will be documented and the separation justified to ensure parents, Ofsted and, where necessary, the wider community can understand the reasons behind separation. Where a subject is taught in a single-sex class, trans pupils will be allowed to attend the single-sex class that corresponds with the gender they identify with.

Pupils’ age and stage of development will be taken into consideration before segregating sports teams. Both sexes will have equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities; where separation is deemed necessary, the single-sex sports teams will receive the same quality and amount of resources.

# Race and ethnicity

TCAT will ensure that pupils of all races and ethnicities are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils and each TCAT school will regularly review its practices to ensure that they are fair.

TCAT will ensure pupils with EAL are treated equally and fairly, while ensuring they are supported at all times.

TCAT will not segregate pupils on the basis of their race or ethnicity, understanding that claims of ‘separate but equal’ will not be tolerated, and that such actions will always be viewed as direct discrimination.

TCAT may, however, take positive action, e.g. organising open days for pupils and families of a specific race that is under-represented, to address the particular challenges affecting pupils of one racial or ethnic group, where this can be shown to be a proportionate way of dealing with such issues.

# Disability

TCAT will ensure that pupils with disabilities are not singled out or treated less favourably than other pupils simply because they have a disability, which includes any mental health issue, regularly reviewing our practices to ensure they are fair.

TCAT will avoid implementing rules that could have an adverse effect on pupils with disabilities (e.g. by making physical fitness a basis for admission, or asking all pupils to deliver a presentation, as this could be unfair towards pupils with anxiety), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

TCAT will ensure that we do not discriminate against pupils with disabilities because of something which is a consequence of their disability (for example, by not allowing a pupil on crutches outside at break time because it would take too long for them to get in and out), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

TCAT and our schools, will make any reasonable adjustments, and provide any auxiliary aids, necessary to ensure the full inclusion of pupils with disabilities, especially where the pupil also has SEND but does not have a SEND statement or EHC plan.

TCAT and our schools, will meet our duty to undertake accessibility planning for pupils with disabilities and ensure that an Accessibility Plan is implemented and reviewed where necessary.

TCAT will adhere to our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for pupils with SEND.

# Religion and belief

TCAT will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because of their religion or belief.

Each TCAT school will ensure that pupils are provided with the appropriate space in which they can practice their faith, e.g. to perform their daily prayers.

Absences in relation to religious observances will be handled in accordance with the TCAT’s Attendance Policy Primary/Secondary as appropriate.

TCAT will liaise with local religious leaders of all faiths to inform the amount of leave pupils will be granted in relation to religious observance.

# Sexual orientation

TCAT will ensure that all gay, lesbian and bisexual pupils, or the children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents, are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

TCAT will ensure that pupils are taught about the nature of marriage, including same-sex marriage, by presenting the facts of English and Welsh law – teachers will not offer personal opinions when discussing marriage in RSHE. Each TCAT school will educate pupils on positive relationships, families and gender identities within the LGBTQ+ community appropriate to the age of the pupils being taught. RSHE lessons will be taught in accordance with the school’s individual policy.

TCAT will ensure that any religious beliefs with regards to sexual orientation are taught to pupils in an educational context, in a manner that is not prejudicial or discriminatory.

TCAT will support LGBTQ+ pupils to feel comfortable and ensure they can celebrate their identity.

Each TCAT school will ensure that there is a designated safe space where pupils can discuss issues of sexual orientation without fear of discrimination.

# Gender reassignment

TCAT will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably in relation to gender reassignment, i.e. because they are trans or have trans parents, siblings or other family members. TCAT recognises that gender reassignment does not necessarily involve physical change and can be solely social and emotional.

Pupils will have the right to dress in accordance with their true gender identity within the constraints of the dress code for the relevant TCAT school, outlined in our School Uniform Policy and the individual uniform requirements of each TCAT school.

Each TCAT school will ensure that there are suitable toilet and changing facilities for pupils to use, including:

* Gender-specific toilets and changing facilities
* Private changing facilities

The facilities will be made available to all pupils and pupils can use the facility they feel most comfortable in, e.g. if a trans pupil wished to use a private changing room.

TCAT will support trans pupils to feel comfortable and ensure they can celebrate their identity.

TCAT will ensure that there is a designated safe space within each TCAT school where trans pupils can discuss issues of gender without fear of discrimination.

TCAT will abide by our LGBTQ+ Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for trans pupils.

# Pregnancy and maternity

TCAT will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they become pregnant, have recently given birth, have children or are breastfeeding.

Each TCAT school will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate absence requests for the treatment and support of pupils who are pregnant or have just given birth.

To ensure all school-age parents and pregnant pupils are properly supported and the individual TCAT school can fulfil its duty of care, TCAT has implemented a Supporting Pregnant Pupils and School Age Parents Policy.

# Looked-after children (LAC)

LAC and previously LAC (PLAC) will be given the highest priority for admissions, as per the requirements of our Admissions Policy.

TCAT and our schools will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are looked after, or have previously been looked after, by the state.

A personal education plan will be created and implemented for all LAC and PLAC on entry to a TCAT school, to ensure that their education and development needs are fully covered, including appropriate transition and catch-up support to ensure that they do not fall behind.

All staff will ensure that any SEND that LAC or PLAC have are duly taken into account and addressed, whether this is with or without a SEND statement or EHC plan.

All TCAT schools will adhere to our LAC Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for LAC.

# The curriculum

Pupils will be exposed to thoughts and ideas of all kinds, and each TCAT school will not make any unjustified changes to curriculum content on the grounds of any protected characteristics that a pupil may have. Each TCAT school will ensure, however, that the curriculum is as balanced as possible, and delivered in such a way that prevents discrimination and the promotion of prejudicial stereotypes.

The observation of inclusive teaching strategies will remain a key aspect of each TCAT school’s SLT programme of monitoring.

TCAT and each TCAT school will respect the right of parents to withdraw their child from sex education.

# Promoting inclusion

TCAT and our schools will promote inclusion and equality through:

* Ensuring that pupils are called by their preferred names, which may be different from their legal names, taking into account the correct spelling, structure and pronunciation
* Ensuring, as far as possible, that our Trust Board, Local Governing Bodies and staff reflect the full diversity of our local community
* Providing an environment where prejudiced assumptions, attitudes and behaviours are continually challenged
* Instilling in pupils an awareness of prejudice, giving them confidence that it can, and must, be eradicated
* Providing a variety of educational and residential visits that expose pupils to a wide range of cultural experiences
* Ensuring equal access to opportunities, such as extracurricular activities and the curriculum
* Taking care in the use of language and the choice of resources, so that teaching and non-teaching staff avoid reinforcing stereotypical views of society
* Valuing the cultural experiences and contributions of all pupils, regardless of any protected characteristic that they may have
* Communicating our policy to parents to gain their understanding, agreement and support for its provisions
* Promoting equality of opportunity within the wider society
* Ensuring admission arrangements will not unfairly disadvantage a pupil from a particular social or racial group, or with SEND

# Pupils that have left school

TCAT’s responsibility to not discriminate, harass or victimise will not end when a pupil has left school. It will continue to apply with regard to subsequent actions related to our previous relationship with the pupil, such as the provision of references.

# The public sector equality duty

TCAT will meet its duty to publish:

* Annual information to demonstrate how TCAT and our schools are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, taking into account the specific circumstances surrounding pupils who have any of the protected characteristics
* Equality objectives (at least every four years) outlining how TCAT and our schools may further equality

There are some protected characteristics where statistical data is less likely to be readily available, and pupils will not be pressured into providing information related to any characteristic which they may identify with.

# Bullying and discrimination

Our Anti-Bullying Policy will be used in conjunction with this policy in order to prevent, and effectively deal with, any discriminatory incidents.

Any bullying incidents of a child protection or safeguarding nature will be reported, recorded and dealt with in line with the process in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

The Headteacher/Head of School, in collaboration with the DSL and/or the Executive Leader for Safeguarding and Inclusion, will decide whether it is appropriate to notify social services and/or the police of any incident.

Concerns with regards to the handling of bullying and discrimination incidents will be dealt with via the procedures outlined in the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

# Staff training

New staff will receive relevant training on the provisions of this policy during their induction.

Whole-school staff training for will be delivered in-house on a regular basis.

Staff will receive the appropriate equalities training that will:

* Focus on staff specialisms in relation to equality, for example, a focus on homophobic bullying to address a planned approach towards inclusion
* Ensure all staff are aware of, and comply with, current equalities legislation and government recommendations
* Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and how they can support pupils with protected characteristics
* Provide support for teachers to effectively manage any discrimination towards pupils with protected characteristics
* Provide up-to-date information on the terms, concepts and current understandings relating to each of the protected characteristics
* Develop appropriate strategies for communication between parents, educators and pupils about any issues related to a protected characteristic
* Ensure that each TCAT school is aware of, and participates in, relevant awareness days, such as Black History Month, World Disability Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, Pride, and International Women’s Day

# Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the published schedule at the front of this document and at any point material changes require it by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and Chief Finance Officer in conjunction with the Executive Leader for Safeguarding and Inclusion, Headteachers/Heads of School, and the Trust Board. Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to all members of staff.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2028.

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| Signed by: | | | |
|  | Executive Headteacher/CEO | Date: |  |
|  | Chair of the Trust Board | Date: |  |