

MAT Policy Front Sheet

Policy:	Equal Opportunities Policy
MAT board:	MAT Board
Date adopted by board:	March 2023
Next review date:	March 2024
Version number:	7

Equal Opportunities Policy

1.0 Introduction

The Trust recognises the benefits of having a diverse community, with individuals who value one another and the different contributions they make. Pupils are taught to value and respect others.

The Trust is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and employer and is committed to equality of opportunity for all. The Trust recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and is committed to preventing unlawful discrimination on the basis of the following protected characteristics:

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, ethnic or national origin, or nationality)
- Religion or belief (including lack of religion or belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marital or civil partnership status; and
- Age

2.0 Statutory framework

The Trust aims to ensure that all policies and practices conform to the principle of equal opportunities and comply with the public sector equality duty set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Trust will tackle inappropriate attitudes and practices in the following ways:

- Staff leading by example and challenging perceived discriminatory attitudes
- Ensuring candidates for employment are treated fairly and without prejudice
- Staff following the 'Staff Code of Conduct'
- Through the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) visible in lessons, assemblies and in all areas of school life
- Through the supportive schools' culture
- Through the schools' policies but in particular Sex and Relationships, Inclusion, Anti- Bullying, Behaviour, Uniform, Admissions, Communication and Recruitment Policies

3.0 Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Communicate the commitment of CST to the promotion of equal opportunities and the public sector Equality Framework
- Promote equal treatment within the schools for all members of the schools' communities
- Create and maintain an open and supportive environment which is free from discrimination
- Foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within the schools
- Remove or help to overcome barriers for pupils where they already exist
- Ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against any person on any ground
- Make it clear and to ensure that all discriminatory words, behaviour and images are treated as unacceptable
- Take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage (known as The Reasonable Adjustment Duty)

4.0 Implementation

4.1 Recognising forms of discrimination

Types: Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination: Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic, for example, rejecting an applicant of one race on the grounds that they would not 'fit in' due to their race is direct discrimination. Direct discrimination also occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their association with another person who has a Protected Characteristic. For example if a pupil is harassed or victimised because a sibling is disabled, this would be direct discrimination against that pupil.

Indirect discrimination: Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of their sex or race. For example, a minimum height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If these criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with a person's sex, they would be indirectly discriminatory.

Discrimination arising from disability: Discrimination arising from disability occurs when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and the treatment cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. For example, where a pupil with cerebral palsy who is a wheelchair user is told they will be unable to attend a school trip because there is no wheelchair access available and other options are not investigated.

Harassment and Victimisation: Harassment is unwanted behaviour that an individual finds offensive, where the other person's behaviour is because the individual has a protected characteristic or there is any connection with a protected characteristic. Victimisation is when someone is treated badly because they have carried out a 'protected act', or because an employer, service provider or other organisation believes that they have or are planning to carry out a protected act.

4.2 Admissions

The schools within the Trust accept applications and admit pupils irrespective of their protected characteristics and will not discriminate on these grounds in the terms on which a place is offered. The one exception to this policy is that children with an EHCP naming the school are prioritised in the admissions process, in accordance with legislation.

4.3 Education and associated services

Equal access: The schools within the Trust will afford all pupils equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects including all sports, irrespective of their protected characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and welfare, and positive action. Separate changing facilities are provided for sports.

Positive action: The schools within the Trust may afford pupils of a particular racial group or pupils with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the special needs of the pupils in that group, for example, special language training for groups whose first language is not English.

Exclusions: The schools within the Trust will not discriminate against any pupil by excluding them from the school or by subjecting them to any other detriment on the grounds of their protected characteristics.

Curriculum: The schools within the Trust will ensure that each child has equal access to all areas of the curriculum. Children with special needs are occasionally withdrawn from class at appropriate times and careful attention is paid to the balance between individually supported work and integrated work with the remainder of the class.

We strive to ensure that there is no bias in the school day in relation to a pupil's sex. For core curriculum subjects, pupils are often seated according to ability. Mixed sex groupings in the classroom are the normal practice and opportunities for collaboration between girls and boys are encouraged.

There is no sex discrimination in the allocation of equipment and tools for technology and other practical sessions. Pupils of both sexes participate equally in all sporting activities, including football, netball and rounders. All extra-curricular clubs and activities are open to both sexes.

Explanation of relevant issues will be delivered via our assemblies and topics that actively encourage equality are discussed using various engaging teaching methods. Participation and interaction is encouraged in lessons and assemblies and students reflect on what they have learnt. Examples of topics that will be presented in assemblies are: equality, tolerance, charity, and British Values.

Teaching materials: Efforts are made to recognise and be aware of the possibility of bias (for example sex or racial) so that this can be eliminated in the schools' teaching and learning materials and teaching styles. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum so as to avoid stereotypes and bias. Where a school identifies a need, it will stock teaching materials and/or books to address that need.

Pupil interaction: All pupils are encouraged to work and play freely with and have respect for all other pupils irrespective of their protected characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and

welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered towards all groups in society through the curriculum and ethos of the schools and pupils will be encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.

Employment: We are an equal opportunities employer. We have a recruitment and selection policy which ensures fairness, irrespective of background. We ensure reasonable adjustments are made for staff to ensure they are not disadvantaged in the workplace. We allow our employees to wear some religious dress to work within the bounds of our staff dress code. We adhere to the local authority guidance on matters of discipline and competency which also has a commitment to equal opportunities.

4.4 Bullying

Schools will not tolerate bullying or cyber-bullying for any reason. Specific types of bullying include:

- Bullying relating to race, religion, belief or culture
- Bullying related to EHCP, learning difficulties or disabilities
- Bullying related to appearance or health conditions
- Bullying relating to sexual orientation
- Bullying of young carers or looked after children or otherwise related to home
- Sexist or sexual bullying

Each school in the Trust has an anti-bullying policy that contains more details about how bullying is tackled.

4.5 School uniform

Uniform policy: The student uniform policy is the same for both sexes. Our schools will consider reasonable requests to alter the school uniform, for example to accommodate genuine religious requirements or reasonable adjustments for disabled children.

Symbols of faith: Certain items of jewellery, such as the Kara bangle and certain items of headwear such as the turban and headscarves may be worn by pupils when doing so is genuinely based on manifesting religious beliefs or identity. This is subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the schools' existing school uniform policy principles (in regards to the school colours for example). Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn under this section, the issue must be referred by the pupil or the pupil's parents to the headteacher of the relevant school whose decision will be final, subject to the complaints procedure.

Disabled pupils: Reasonable adjustments may be required to the school uniform for disabled pupils who require them. The pupil or his or her parents should refer the matter to the headteacher to ensure all reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate the pupil.

4.6 Religious belief

The schools in our Trust are non-religious and are not identified as being associated with any particular religion or belief system. The schools do however, respect the right and freedom of individuals to worship in accordance with their own faiths, or to have no faith, subject always to their respecting the rights and freedoms of the school community as a whole and considerations of safety and health.

4.7 Racial equality

We do not tolerate any forms of racism or racist behaviour. Should a racist incident occur, we will deal with it in accordance with school procedures (see behaviour policy). We will strive to eliminate all forms of racism and racial discrimination by:

- Promoting equality of opportunity regardless of race, ethnicity or religion
- Promoting good relations between people of different racial and ethnic groups
- Seeking to educate pupils in a manner which promotes community cohesion in a multi-cultural society

4.8 Disability and special needs

Our approach: We are inclusive schools that welcome members of the school community with disabilities and special educational needs. We maintain and drive a positive culture towards inclusion of disabled people and those with special educational needs in all the activities of the school and we will not treat a member of the school community less favourably on these grounds without justification. Our facilities for the disabled, physical and otherwise, and those with special educational needs are adequate. We will do all that is reasonable to ensure that the schools' curriculum, ethos, culture, policies, procedures and premises are made accessible to everyone. Our policy on special educational needs is consistent with this policy.

Definitions: Children have 'special educational needs' if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a "substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activity "(Equality Act 2010). For further clarification, please refer to the policies mentioned in the paragraph above.

Reasonable adjustments: The schools have an on-going duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs in respect of the education and associated services provided to ensure that such pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other pupils. This is a broad expression that covers all aspects of school life including the curriculum, classroom organisation and timetable, access to school facilities, clubs and visits, school sports and school policies.

Reasonable adjustments may typically include:

- Allowing extra time for a dyslexic child to complete an exam
- Providing examination papers in larger print for a child with a visual impairment
- Arranging a variety of accessible sports activities.

In making reasonable adjustments, the schools are required to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils. The schools will carefully consider any proposals made by parents and will not unreasonably refuse any requests for such aids and services.

Informing the school: Parents of pupils should notify the headteacher of the relevant school in writing if they are aware or suspect that the pupil (or prospective pupil) has a disability or if they (either parent) or the pupil (or prospective pupil) have at any time had or has a learning difficulty.

Parents should provide copies of all written reports and other relevant information upon request. Providing the school with such information will enable the school to support the pupil as much as possible. Confidential information of this kind will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis. The school will have due regard to any request made by a parent or pupil (who has sufficient understanding of the nature and effect of the request) to treat the nature or existence of the person's disability as confidential.

Access: The schools will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether disabled users of the premises are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and appropriate, the school will improve access for disabled users of the premises.

4.9 Pupils with Educational Health Care Plans or Higher Needs Funding

Each individual school's policy on special educational needs includes details about the welfare and educational provision for pupils with Statements of Higher Needs Funding or Educational Health Care Plans.

4.10 Pupils with English as an additional language

English as an Additional Language (EAL): Pupils with English as an Additional Language will receive additional learning support if necessary and if resources permit. Our schools actively track progress of EAL students using a tracker and addresses need both in-class and further support. Our schools will consult with the pupil and the parents as appropriate to address further needs. Linguistic diversity is positively recognised.

Language and culture: The schools will ensure that:

- Links are made to involve parents directly in the work of the school
- Interpretation and translation services are made available if requested as quickly as possible where resources permit
- Links are established within the local community
- Staff work effectively with other local services
- Learning support for ethnic minority pupils is efficient and effective
- Provision is made for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, supported by appropriate resources and information
- Pupils' names should be accurately recorded and correctly pronounced. Pupils should be encouraged to accept and respect names from cultures other than their own

4.11 Responsibilities

All members of the Trust community are expected to comply with this policy and to treat others with dignity at all times.

Overall responsibility: The Finance and Personnel Committee of Community Schools Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of the Trust's equal opportunities policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. The Trust Board has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the headteachers for operating the policy and ensuring its accessibility, availability, maintenance and review.

Management: Those working at management level throughout the Trust have a specific responsibility to display an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of the school with regard to equal opportunities in light of the public sector equality duty.

Leadership Group: The leadership group of each school is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements to monitor the performance of potentially disadvantaged pupils are in place.

Arrangements include:

- Identifying and investigating any patterns in exclusions and poor attendance
- Monitoring differences in attitudes to school, work and other pupils
- Addressing harassment and bullying
- Assessing the impact of any additional support
- Evaluating performance among different groups

5.0 Monitoring and review

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively with respect to admissions and to identify those sections of the local community which may be under-represented in the schools, our schools monitor applicants' sex, race, disability and religion or belief as part of the admissions procedure. We also maintain records of this data in an anonymised format, solely for the purposes stated in this policy.

Review: The headteacher of each school is responsible for the ongoing monitoring and regular analysis of the data monitored under the paragraph above and will arrange for the taking of appropriate positive steps to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination where necessary. The headteachers are also responsible for reviewing whether the aims of this policy are carried out throughout all areas of the schools and taking appropriate action where necessary. This policy is reviewed annually by the CEO. Recommendations for any amendments are reported to the finance and personnel committee.

6.0 Recording and reporting Incidents of discrimination

Questions about this policy: If you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the CEO or chair of the Trust's board.

Complaints: If you believe that you have received less favourable treatment on any of the unlawful grounds listed above or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to your detriment, you are encouraged to raise the matter through the Trust's formal Complaints Procedure. For a copy of the Trust's Complaints Procedure, please contact the CEO's PA. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the complaints procedure.

Reports: If you would like to report a breach of this policy that does not constitute a complaint, please contact the CEO or chair of the Trust's board.

Enforcement: The school will urgently investigate every complaint and report. Disciplinary action may be taken against any member of the school community who is found to have acted in contravention of this policy.

Recording: All reported breaches of this policy will be recorded and this record will be reviewed annually by the CEO.

7.0 Publication

This policy will be published on the Trust's website and is available when requested in writing.

8.0 Policy links

The equal opportunities policy impacts upon many policies within the schools. Amongst the key policies this policy links to:

- The Accessibility Plan
- The Recruitment and Selection Policy
- The Public Sector Equality Duty
- The Staff Dress Code
- The Staff Code of Conduct
- The Student Uniform Policy
- The Equality Act 2010