

## Liberty Academy Trust

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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<b>Written By</b>	Director of Education and EDI Strategic Lead
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## 1 Introduction and Legal Context

- 1.1 Liberty Academy Trust is committed to equality and valuing diversity and actively supports practices that promote genuine equality of opportunity and inclusivity for all staff and pupils across its schools.
- 1.2 The Trust is committed to promoting a positive and diverse culture in which all staff and pupils are valued and supported to fulfil their potential irrespective of any protected characteristic.
- 1.3 The Trust recognises its obligations under the Equality Act (2010)<sup>1</sup> and is committed to promoting the equality and diversity of all those we work with especially our employees, pupils and visitors. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, bullying and harassment and will make every effort to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) and its subsequent provisions.
- 1.4 This policy and all associated procedures also apply to all staff (including volunteers and pupils on placement), young people and visitors at our schools and should be read in conjunction with the following trust-wide policies: SEND, Admissions, Uniform, Behaviour, Exclusions, Complaints. This should be read in conjunction with individual school policies relating to: Accessibility plan and Equality Information and Objectives document.
- 1.5 Failure to comply with these policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action.
- 1.6 Discriminatory treatment, bullying or harassment of staff or pupils by visitors is not tolerated.
- 1.7 Liberty Academy Trust's EDI vision is as follows:-

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/equality-and-diversity#:~:text=The%20Equality%20Act%20protects%20people,gender%20reassignment>

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) VISION



Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) vision illustrates our commitment to promoting a culture of belonging for all staff and pupils across the Trust. By actively promoting EDI principles, we strive to empower every individual within our schools and across the central team to achieve their full potential and foster a sense of acceptance and belonging.

## KEY ACTIONS TO PROMOTE EDI ACROSS THE TRUST

### Leading through accountability and moral responsibility

- An EDI Partnership Board comprising of representatives from individuals of protected characteristics drives the implementation and monitoring of the EDI strategy
- Regular training and development for staff at all levels enhances understanding of EDI and equips them with the knowledge and understanding needed to champion inclusive practices in all areas of the Trust
- Ongoing collaboration with external organisations and partners promotes understanding, support and advocacy for pupils and families of protected characteristics
- Mechanisms to collect and analyse EDI data to inform Trust actions and priorities are embedded
- The EDI Strategy is regularly reviewed and updated in response to feedback, changing demographics, and opportunities for improvement

### Driving excellence in education for autistic children and young people

- The curriculum incorporates diverse perspectives, experiences, and content to ensure representation and to avoid the perpetuation of stereotypes
- Universal principles of design cater for the diverse learning needs of all pupils through adaptations to the environment, assistive technology, and differentiated resources
- Ongoing professional development opportunities are provided to ensure inclusive pedagogies are embedded into classroom practice
- A culture of continuous learning and improvement for all is embedded across the Trust
- Staff are kept up-to-date about emerging research, best practice, and statutory requirements

### Supporting resilience and wellbeing

- Recruitment guidelines actively encourage a diverse applicant pool and unbiased selection processes are embedded
- Staff networks linked to protected characteristics are in place as a direct response to staff feedback and demand
- Families are involved in decision-making processes
- The Trust is a safe and inclusive space where pupils and staff feel valued, respected, and empowered to express their identities and experiences
- Counselling and mental health services are provided that are sensitive to the needs of pupils and delivered in an appropriate manner

#courage #determination #teamwork

## 2 Publication of Information and Equality Objectives

- 2.1 The Trust acknowledges its legal duties to publish information on compliance with the three strands of the Public Sector Equality Duty<sup>2</sup> and, in addition, to publish specific and measurable equality objectives.
- 2.2 The Trust will work across its school communities to analyse data and existing practices to set out the actions taken in compliance of the equality duty and to inform the setting of relevant equality objectives to support the development of each school and its community. These will be set out in an individual school Equality Information and Objectives plan.
- 2.3 The information on the equality duty will be updated annually and the objectives every 4 years. Individual school Equality Information and Objectives are published on each school's website.

## 3 Compliance

- 3.1 This policy has been developed in response to the Equality Act (2010) and replaces previous policies relating to race, gender and disability equality. It has been designed to help schools meet the public sector equality duty to:
  - 3.1.1 Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct.
  - 3.1.2 Advance equality of opportunity between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - 3.1.3 Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2 The Equality Act (2010) defines nine protected characteristics. Each of the following are potentially applicable to each school community (pupils, staff and governors):
  - Age (as an employer but not applicable to students)
  - Disability
  - Sex
  - Gender reassignment
  - Race
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Religion or belief
  - Sexual orientation
- 3.3 The following pupil groups have been identified as key recipients in terms of the implementation of this policy in schools:
  - SEND / Autism (all pupils within our schools)
  - Looked After Children or Children in Need
  - Children at risk of exclusion

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty>

- Children from an ethnic group, including those from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background
- Children missing in education
- Children with medical conditions affecting attendance at school
- School age / teenage parents
- Young carers
- Children within, or at risk of joining, the criminal justice system
- Children with mental health issues
- Children in receipt of free school meals
- Children living in areas of deprivation
- Those who are classed as Gifted and talented
- Are gender questioning or going through transition
- Children who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.
- Children who are non-binary or transgender.

3.4 Staff, Trustees and local committee members will:

- Actively promote equality of opportunity in all areas of school life.
- Ensure that members of each school community know their rights and respect the rights of others.
- Aim to ensure that prejudice or discrimination in all its forms is actively rejected.
- Raise awareness of equality issues for all members of each school community, and through our links with the local community.
- Establish strategies to ensure equal access to the curriculum and enable each individual to fulfil his/her potential regardless of ability, gender, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation.

3.5 Equality and diversity principles based on the above aims will be embedded in our daily practices, policies and the processes of decision-making, including:

- Admissions, induction and attendance.
- Pupils' progress and achievement.
- Pupils' personal development and wellbeing, particularly in relation to safeguarding.
- Parental involvement.
- Working with the wider community.
- Behaviour management, staff recruitment and professional development.
- Curriculum access and participation.
- Teaching styles and strategies.

3.6 Liberty Academy trust sets Equality Objectives for a three year period. Our equality objectives are based on our analysis of data and other information. They focus on those areas where we have agreed to take action to improve equality and opportunity. The se can be found in the Liberty Academy Trust **Equality Information and Objectives Policy**.

## 4 Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for this policy and for ensuring compliance. The designated senior member of staff with overall responsibility for all equality and diversity matters at each school is the Principal.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of all staff to:
- Treat colleagues, young people and visitors with dignity and respect; and avoid behaving in any manner that may give rise to claims of discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
  - Support and participate in any measures introduced to promote equality and diversity.
  - Actively challenge discrimination and disadvantage in accordance with their responsibilities.
  - Report any issues associated with equality and diversity in accordance with this policy.
- 4.3 As well as the above responsibilities, it is also the responsibility of school governors to understand the principles of The Equality Act and to oversee the implementation of this EDI policy so they can hold school leaders accountable.
- 4.4 Liberty Academy Trust has an EDI Board comprised of representatives from central team and each school who meet on a termly basis to discuss the Trust EDI vision and strategy and hold the EDI Strategic Lead to account on actions.
- 4.5 The EDI Strategic Lead produces an EDI Impact Report at the end of each academic year, which details the work done and achievements of the EDI Board throughout the year. This can be found on the EDI pages of the staff intranet.

## 5 Duty to make reasonable adjustments

- 5.1 The Trust will actively seek to make reasonable adjustments, where there is a need to ensure that a disabled person has the same access to everything as a non-disabled person, as far as is reasonable. We will take positive and proactive steps to remove, reduce or prevent the obstacles faced by a disabled individual, as far as is reasonable. See the **appendix** for an overview of our approach to reasonable adjustments.
- 5.2 The duty to make reasonable adjustments covers all aspects of school life, including the curriculum, classroom organisation and timetabling, access to facilities, clubs and visits, sports and policies.
- 5.3 The Trust will monitor the physical features of school premises to consider whether disabled users of the premises are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and proportionate, the Trust will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises. Please see the Accessibility Plan for further information, which can be found on the respective school's website.
- 5.4 Each pupil at the school has an Education, Health and Care plan which

details needs and provision required with respect to their Autism and other special Education Needs. Parents/carers and staff should work together to ensure each pupils' needs are met and ensure reasonable adjustments are made to support the pupil.

- 5.5 In making reasonable adjustments, the Trust is required to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils. Staff will carefully consider any proposals made by parents/carers and will not unreasonably refuse any requests for such aids and services.

## **6 Uniform**

- 6.1 The Uniform policy (available on individual school websites) is consistent with this policy.
- 6.2 The same Uniform policy applies equally to all pupils, irrespective of their gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare.
- 6.3 However, all schools will consider reasonable requests to alter the uniform, for example for genuine religious requirements and in making reasonable adjustments for disabled children to avoid substantial disadvantage.
- 6.4 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 or racial beliefs or identity. Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn under this section, the issue must be referred to the Principal, whose decision will be final, subject to the complaints procedure.
- 6.5 We welcome afro-textured hair worn in all styles, including but not limited to, afros, locs, twists, braids, cornrows, fades, hair straightened through the application of heat or chemicals, weaves, wigs, headscarves and wraps. However, if staff are supporting a child who is at increased risk to pull or grab hair, appropriate consideration should be made and appropriate measures put into place to reduce risk of harm to staff which may mean covering or securing loose hair.

## **7 Admissions policy**

Admissions criteria are defined under the Trust's Admissions policy and are applied consistently to every young person, irrespective of any protected characteristic.

## **8 Religious Beliefs**

The Trust respects the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, students and parents/carers, and each school will comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice wherever possible. An example where a request may be refused is if the religious observance takes place during lesson time. Whilst the school will explore other ways to accommodate the



request, such as amended timetabling, this may not always be possible.

## **9 Curriculum delivery**

- 9.1 The curriculum is crucial to tackling inequalities for pupils including gender stereotyping, preventing bullying and raising attainment for certain groups. The principles of equality and diversity are embedded in our academic and social curriculum. Positive and proactive steps will be taken to prevent discrimination against, or victimisation of, any pupil in the provision of education or access to any benefit, facility or service including educational trips, work experience and leisure activities.
- 9.2 The Trust recognises and promotes awareness of the possibility of bias (for example gender or racial), and works to eliminate such bias in both teaching and learning materials and pedagogical approaches. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum to avoid stereotypes and bias.
- 9.3 The Trust may take positive action to give students of a particular racial group, or pupils with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the needs of the pupils in that group, for example, special language training for groups whose first language is not English.
- 9.4 All pupils are encouraged to work with, socialise, and have respect for, all other pupils, irrespective of any 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 Trust, and pupils are encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.
- 9.5 The Trust is committed to continually reviewing the curriculum and as such has employed the services of a curriculum consultant to ensure that the curriculum is further refined to support understanding of diversity and ensure that our curriculum is anti-racist.

## **10 Exclusion policy**

The decision to exclude a child (either suspension or permanently) is a last resort and will be made in accordance with the behaviour and exclusion policies. That policy applies to all students and any exclusion decision will take into account our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

## **11 Gender Identity**

- 11.1 The Trust is mindful of its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 towards pupils identifying as transgender and non-binary.
- 11.2 In respect of pupils identifying as trans-gender or non-binary, the Trust will be sensitive to their individual needs whilst also recognising the needs and sensitivities of other pupils. Pupils who have confirmed that they have commenced the process of transitioning, and therefore fall under the protected characteristic of gender-reassignment will be

provided with appropriate pastoral care and support.

- 11.3 In the absence of guidance from the DfE, at Liberty Academy Trust we will respond to the wishes of a pupil to be known by a preferred name and/or to change their preferred pronouns, ideally with parental consent. However, if the pupil so wishes to change their preferred name/pronouns and are deemed by staff as Gillick competent (under 16, but able to consent for themselves), we will honour this.
- 11.4 We will always encourage pupils to involve parents/carers and will work collaboratively with parents/carers to explore any concerns the pupil or parent/carers may have. No changes will be made to the school's systems in respect of legal names or gender unless parental consent is gained and the necessary legal documentation is provided.

## **12 Recruitment and selection**

- 12.1 All employees, whether part-time, full-time, temporary or permanent will be treated fairly and equally. We will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy. The Trust seeks applications from anyone who is suitably qualified and experienced for the role, including those with protected characteristics, and particularly welcome from neurodivergent individuals applications.
- 12.2 Where appropriate, the Trust will endeavour to make all reasonable and effective adjustments during the recruitment and selection process. Where recruitment and selection is carried out by a third party, on behalf of the Trust, we will take all reasonable steps to ensure they adhere to the principles of this policy.

## **13 Reporting and recording incidents of discrimination and harassment**

All incidents of discriminatory treatment, bullying and harassment must be reported to senior staff and recorded as soon as is reasonably possible (and in any event within 24 hours of the incident). All bullying-related incidents (confirmed or otherwise), will be addressed in accordance with our Anti-Bullying Policy.

## **14 Complaints and grievances**

If an individual believes that they have been discriminated against, harassed or victimised, they are asked to follow our complaints or grievance procedure (as appropriate).

## **15 Implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review**

- 15.1 The designated senior member of staff with overall responsibility for the

implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy' in each school is the Principal.

- 15.2 Additional support can also be provided to any parent/carer or significant person, wishing to know more about the policy and procedures outlined above. A copy of this policy document is available for inspection on each school's premises during office hours and an electronic copy is posted on our website.
- 15.3 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be reviewed on a three-year cycle by a representative working party consisting of the following stakeholders:
- Pupils
  - Parents/carers
  - Staff
  - Local Governors
  - Trustees
  - Community representatives
- 15.4 The effectiveness of this policy will be evaluated using feedback from pupils, parents/carers and staff, which is reported on termly through consultation and surveys, and an assessment of progress against targets identified in each school's Equality Information and Objectives document.



# Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace at Liberty

These are some of the ways in which reasonable adjustments are made for colleagues with additional needs and/or disabilities at Liberty Academy Trust:



Adjustments to the environment



Altering working hours or offering flexibility



Providing additional training or support from colleagues



Acquiring or modifying equipment



Modifying instructions to ensure clarity



Providing supervision or 1:1 support



Offering more time for dyslexic individuals for tasks which involve reading and writing



Sharing duties with another colleague



Offering a 'buddy' system to eliminate feelings of isolation

## Supporting Colleagues who are Neurodivergent:



Be consistent



Give time to adjust to transitions / change / for understanding



Encourage the use of visual planners and organisers



Give clear and precise information in manageable chunks



Offer support for executive functioning (time management / organisation skills / working memory etc)

## Supporting Colleagues who are Sensory Impaired (Hearing / Visual):



Consider a range of ways of explaining actions or giving instructions so that misunderstandings are avoided



For HI: Ensure colleagues can see the person speaking



For HI: Ensure any visual clues used are clear



For VI: Use lots of verbal description and directional instruction



For VI: Ask what aids are required for each colleague individually

## Supporting Colleagues who have a Medical or Physical Disability:



Consider access issues - can colleagues exit the building in an emergency?



Be patient



Be aware of any personal care plans



If colleagues have a condition that affects their speech, ask them to repeat what they have said - don't pretend



Give additional time for tasks if needed

## Supporting Colleagues who have a Mental Health Condition:



Capitalise on colleagues' strengths to build confidence



Be consistent



Negotiate deadlines that are manageable



Be patient and demonstrate empathy



Allow for 'time out' to support self management of mood and anxiety