



## Equality Strategy 2020-24

Equality of opportunity will only exist when we recognise and value difference and work together for inclusion.

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## Introduction

Equality of opportunity will only exist when we recognise and value difference and work together for inclusion.

As a Trust we are committed to cultivating an inclusive environment which:

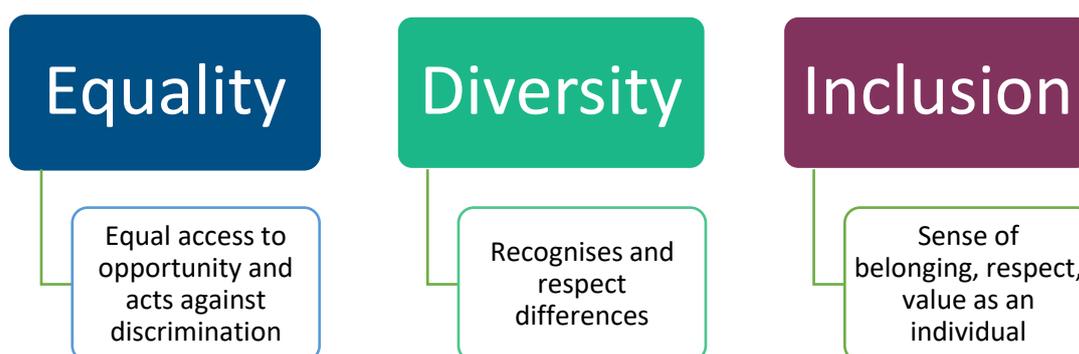
- Respects that everyone is individual
- Is responsive to individual needs
- Celebrates differences and empowers individuals to share their experiences and ideas, recognising that diverse views and beliefs make a positive contribution to our workplace and school communities
- Identifies and removes barriers
- Provides quality of opportunity
- Ensure everyone feels represented, included and valued

The diversity that exists within our school communities is one of our greatest assets. We have a moral duty to respond to this diversity, and make sure we reflect this in our policies and procedures, and in practise through the day to day delivery of education.

We also have a statutory duty, as a public sector organisation to promote equality for our pupils, and for those who work for us and eliminate discrimination. See [Appendix 1 – What the law says about equalities](#) and [Appendix 2 – Unlawful behaviour](#).

The strategy sets out our commitment to equality and our goals over its duration and is aligned with our mission is to provide opportunities and an environment where everyone has the chance to **realise their potential**.

## Definitions



**Equality** is about ensuring everybody has an equal opportunity and is not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics. It doesn't mean treating everyone the same, different people will have different barriers. It means treating everyone with fairness and respect and recognising the needs of individuals wherever we can.

Equality is backed by legislation (Equality Act 2010) which recognises nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment

- Race
- Religion or belief
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sex
- In addition, we have chosen to include social disadvantage to help address the inequalities that result from differences in a pupil's background or family circumstances.

**Diversity** is about recognising and valuing difference, where everyone is respected for who they are.

**Inclusion** refers to an individual's experience within the Trust and school community and the extent to which they feel valued and included.

## **Equality Consultative Group**

To support and monitor the implementation of the strategy we have established an Equality Consultative Group (ECG) with representation from across our schools and governance. Further details of the ECG can be found on the Discovery Trust website.

The group will champion the voice of protected groups and help promote and raise awareness around equality issues.

Pupils are represented by specific forums (for example Pupil Parliament) as well as in a variety of other involvement activities within school.

## **Knowing and reflecting our communities**

To support us in making informed decisions when performing our functions, it is important that we understand our staff and school community demographic.

The population can be broken down by equality group to provide us with a better understanding of the people within our school communities and help us identify inequality and actions to address.

A breakdown of pupil, staff and governance characteristic will be gathered as a priority objective, which we aim to achieve by the end of 2021.

## **Employment**

We want Discovery to be an inclusive place to work. We aim to create opportunities and reduce barriers for everyone, particularly under-represented groups. We are committed to making sure there is no unjustified discrimination in our processes for recruitment and selection, performance management and pay, and that promotion and retention is fairly granted across all our operations.

### ***Recruitment and selection***

Our ambition is to promote a more inclusive environment, which attracts all candidates and signals our commitment to celebrate and promote diversity. By taking an inclusive approach we are more likely attract a diverse pool of talent and experience.

Our recruitment application form allows for the collection of diversity data which we aim to use to as a measure, for example by reviewing drop-out rates between applicants, those shortlisted and those appointed during the year. We can then review trends and act on findings.

We will review our equality data to determine when to use positive action to attract candidates where we identify under-representation of a particular group. The following examples of a positive action statement can be used when writing job adverts:

We particularly encourage applications from [protected characteristic(s)], who are currently under-represented within the School/Trust at these levels/within these areas.

There are also other measures of positive action which may be used, for example promoting job opportunities at events attracting diverse communities or promoting family friendly working patterns in role descriptions. Recruiting managers should consult with HR to determine whether it is appropriate to include a positive action statement.

We recognise the potential for unconscious bias in the recruitment process and this forms the basis of our objective to implement 'blind recruitment' which removes the demographic characteristics of the candidate from the shortlisting process as an effective way to recruit more diverse staff.

### ***Pay progression***

The Trust has a duty to ensure that all pay decisions are made using objective data so there is no discriminatory effect on an individual or groups with a protected characteristic, this is set out in the Pay Policy.

When making pay decisions, schools should take care to avoid discriminating against teachers on grounds of their protected characteristics and should review pay progression data for staff with different protected characteristics.

The Trust Board assess the equality impact of pay decisions by reviewing summarised pay progression data for staff with different protected characteristics across the Trust.

In specific relation to gender bias, a Gender Pay Gap report is published annually on the Trust website and reviewed by the Board of Trustees.

### ***Reasonable adjustments***

Equality doesn't mean treating everybody the same. We recognise that where employees have different needs, they might need different support too, such as workplace adjustments.

The Trust recognises that equality legislation extends beyond the protected characteristics of an individual employee and has broader responsibilities to employees and situations that maybe covered by the Act. For example, an employee with parental or caring responsibilities for a disabled dependent may have rights which the Trust would need to consider.

### ***Training & Development***

All employees are required to undertake mandatory equality and diversity training as part of their induction. This is updated at regular intervals.

Additional training is available to support managers with fair recruitment and selection.

## **Assessing the equality implications of policies and decisions**

Whenever significant decisions are being made or policies developed, thought must be given to the equality implications. The extent of this will vary depending on the nature and significance of the decision.

It is good practice for the Trust and schools to keep a note of any equality consideration. Although this does not necessarily need to take the form of a formal equality analysis, we have developed an

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form to provide a framework and demonstrate that equality implications have been considered.

It is the responsibility of the policy owner to ensure equality implications are considered and shared with the body or person responsible for approving the policy.

The EqIA will be implemented in a light-touch way, proportionate to the issue being considered.

## Gathering and analysing equality data

Equality objectives should be based on an analysis of data and other information collected throughout the year in relation to the protected characteristic. Data in relation to the following functions will be assessed at a Trust and/or school level:

Function	How measures & monitored
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Demographic data for pupils, staff and governance volunteers</b></li> </ul>	Equality objective for the period 2020-24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Admissions</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Attendance</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Attainment</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Exclusions</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Prejudice Related Incidents</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Provision for pupils with SEND</b></li> </ul>	Reviewed at school level and monitored by the Advisory Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Curriculum effectiveness</b></li> </ul>	Equality objective for the period 2020-24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Recruitment</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Pay progression data</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Gender pay gap</b></li> </ul>	Equality objective for the period 2020-24 Reviewed at school level and monitored by the Trust Board Published and reviewed by the Trust Board
<p><b>Data to be gathered/analysed in the future as the strategy develops:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Flexible working requests – analysis of the request to acceptance rate by protective characteristic across each school</li> <li>▪ Retention rates</li> <li>▪ Uptake of CPD</li> <li>▪ Staff survey results</li> </ul>	

## Equality and diversity in the curriculum

Schools are actively encouraged to embed equality and diversity within the curriculum. As a Trust we aim to empower our schools and teachers to develop a curriculum that both reflects the differing groups of children in their care and the community in which they will both shape and be active members of in the future. The National Curriculum sets out guidance and suggestions as to what can be covered in each subject area.

### *What do we mean by 'embedding equality and diversity'?*

- **Equality** means that the curriculum should not disadvantage any pupil or group of pupils because of their background or characteristics.
- **Diversity** means that the curriculum should represent the diversity of modern society and facilitate an environment in which all pupils feel welcome in the learning community.

### ***How do we embed equality and diversity?***

Planning should consider how stereotypes are countered and how pupil voice of all children is maximised.

Resources and materials should promote equality, avoiding stereotypes.

Staff must seek to inform themselves about topics and issues around diversity and equality as unconscious bias may inadvertently influence teaching – this can be done through research (books/online) and or talking to others who are from other backgrounds who may see situations through an alternative lens.

By teaching about diversity, we teach children to recognise, respect and value difference as a strength. Schools are encouraged to take into account and celebrate differences: special educational needs, disability, gender, religion, ethnicity, faith or belief and sexual orientation.

Schools will provide continuous professional development and access to curriculum networks that will support teacher development and understanding.

### **Pupil Provision**

The Trust and its schools will ensure that pupils are provided with appropriate support to recognise their individual needs. This includes protection under the Act extending the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils.

All policies relating to the provision of education, the curriculum, behaviour for learning, attendance, exclusion, medical treatment and child protection and safeguarding policies should consider the provisions and duties of the Act.

### **School Responsibilities**

In order for schools to meet the general equality duty, there are two specific duties that they are required to carry out. These are:

- To publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the equality duty.
- To prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objective.

Schools will therefore identify and publish on their website at least one objective directly related to national or local evidence of any issues relating to the performance of individuals with protected characteristics. These objectives will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher within the context of the school's overall performance planning, monitoring and evaluation cycle.

Each of our schools will also prepare an annual report of activities carried out in the year towards the achievement of those objectives and other activities carried out to comply with the requirements of the equality duty which will be presented to their Advisory Board (e.g. this might include staff, governance, pupil training and awareness, specific local projects or educational interventions, etc).

## Equality objectives 2020/24

We have set five objectives which cover the period October 2020 to September 2024.

Objective	Why is this a priority?	Planned timescale
<p><b>Equality objective 1:</b> To identify and gather equality data to understand the diversity demographics of the Trust and schools and identify further actions to address inequalities.</p>	<p>Objectives should be set on the basis of a thorough understanding of equality data.</p> <p>The Trust must publish demographic data which is required to comply with the public sector equality duty</p>	By the end of year 1 – 2020/21
<p><b>Equality objective 2:</b> To lead schools in developing inclusivity in all areas of practice and train all staff to provide an inclusive curriculum that represents our diverse culture and society and encourages acceptance and respect.</p>	<p>The curriculum should reflect the history and culture of pupils of all backgrounds and should prepare them to actively engage in a diverse society.</p> <p>The GEC app will provide a baseline for future development.</p>	By the end of year 4 – 2023/24
<p><b>Equality objective 3:</b> To create a diverse workforce that better reflects over diverse community by addressing the potential for unconscious bias in recruitment by implementing a 'blind recruitment' process.</p>	<p>National evidence shows this should be a priority because of the significantly lower proportions of BME job applicants who are shortlisted and of BME interviewees who are appointed.</p>	<p>Pilot up and running by end of year 1 – 2020/21</p> <p>Full implementation by September 2021</p>
<p><b>Equality objective 4:</b> To establish an equality group to monitor the implementation of the equality strategy, objectives and champion equality issues.</p>	<p>If we are to turn our commitments in this strategy into actual practice we need to involve people with diverse perspectives and understanding. This will help drive and embed equality across the Trust.</p>	To be in place by September 2021
<p><b>Equality objective 5:</b>  Develop a reporting template for schools to evidence compliance with the public sector equality duty</p>	<p>Whilst schools actively promote equality and diversity in schools their reporting and demonstrating compliance with the public sector duty is inconsistent.</p> <p>A template will provide a consistent format and direct leaders thinking.</p>	<p>Template to be launched Spring 2021.</p> <p>Schools to share draft with Advisory Board Summer 2021 as a work in progress.</p>
<p><b>Equality objective 6:</b>  To support schools to increase opportunities for flexible working</p>	<p>Recruiting and retaining teachers is a huge challenge for schools. There are many reasons why teachers are leaving the profession but the difficulty of</p>	Link to Flexible Working Ambassador Schools project. December 2022: project end date.

	fitting work around family life is a huge factor. The biggest group of leavers consists of women between the ages of 30 and 39, and more than half of the teachers who leave to raise a family never return to the classroom.	
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The strategy and objectives will be regularly monitored by the Board of Trustees. An end-of year progress report will be provided to the Board of Trustees.

The strategy will be reviewed by the Head of Governance annually.

## Appendix 1 - What the law says about equalities

There are a number of equalities based national laws and guidelines which mandate and guide how we should demonstrate equality. The principle equality drivers include:

Legislation	Requirement
<b>The Equality Act 2010</b>	Protection from discrimination on the basis of 9 protected characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Age (duty as employer, not in relation to pupils)</li><li>• Sex</li><li>• Ethnicity</li><li>• Religion or Belief</li><li>• Disability</li><li>• Sexual Orientation</li><li>• Gender Re-assignment</li><li>• Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</li><li>• Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</li></ul>
<b>General Equality Duty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.</li><li>• Advance equality of opportunity</li><li>• Foster good relations</li></ul>
<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To publish relevant, information demonstrating compliance with the Equality Duty</li><li>• To analyse effect of policies and practices on equality.</li><li>• Set specific, measurable Equality Objectives.</li></ul>

As a public body, the trust must comply with the Equality Act 2010 which gives protection to individuals and groups identifying with the nine protected characteristics in the act.

The Public Sector Equality Duty supports good decision making by the Trust by requiring us to consider how different people will be affected by our functions, policies and services.

The duty means we aim to remove or minimise any disadvantage that people may experience due to their protected characteristic. This includes taking action where the needs of people with certain protected characteristics are different from other people's needs and encouraging them to take a greater part in public life and activities where this is disproportionately low.

The Equality Act provisions not only cover who and how we provide education to but also our staff. We have responsibilities as an employer to ensure that people with protected characteristics are not discriminated against when seeking employment with us, while working for us or when taking part in work-related activities.

## Appendix 2 – Unlawful behaviour

The Equalities Act 2010 defines four kinds of unlawful behaviour – direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; harassment and victimisation.

**Direct discrimination** occurs when one person treats another less favourably, because of a protected characteristic, than they treat – or would treat – other people. This describes the most clear-cut and obvious examples of discrimination – for example if an employee was refused a promotion because of their race.

**Indirect discrimination** occurs when a “provision, criterion or practice” is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic. An example might be holding a parents’ meeting on a Friday evening, which could make it difficult for observant Jewish parents to attend, or arranging the weekly CPD sessions for teachers on days when no part time staff are available for work. It is a defence against a claim of indirect discrimination if it can be shown to be “a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim”. This means both that the reason for the rule or practice is legitimate, and that it could not reasonably be achieved in a different way which did not discriminate.

**Harassment** has a specific legal definition in the Act - it is “unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person”. This covers unpleasant and bullying behaviour, but potentially extends also to actions which, whether intentionally or unintentionally, cause offence to a person because of a protected characteristic. Where schools are concerned, the offence of harassment as defined in this way in the Act applies only to harassment because of disability, race, sex or pregnancy and maternity, and not to religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. It is very important to recognise that this does not mean that schools are free to bully or harass pupils on these other grounds - to do so would still be unlawful as well as unacceptable. Any case against the school would be on grounds of direct discrimination rather than harassment.

**Victimisation** occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done (“a protected act”) in connection with the Act.

A protected act might involve, for example, making an allegation of discrimination or bringing a case under the Act, or supporting another person’s complaint by giving evidence or information, but it includes anything that is done under or in connection with the Act. Even if what a person did or said was incorrect or misconceived, for example based on a misunderstanding of the situation or of what the law provides, they are protected against retaliation unless they were acting in bad faith. The reason for this is to ensure that people are not afraid to raise genuine concerns about discrimination because of fear of retaliation.

As well as it being unlawful to victimise a person who does a protected act, a child must not be victimised because of something done by their parent or a sibling in relation to the Act. This means that a child must not be made to suffer in any way because, for example, her mother has made a complaint of sex discrimination against the school, or her brother has claimed that a teacher is bullying him because he is gay, whether or not the mother or brother was acting in good faith. If a pupil has himself or herself done a protected act – such as making a complaint of discrimination against a teacher – then the child’s own good faith will be relevant. For example, if the parent’s complaint is based on information from her son and the son was deliberately lying, it is not victimisation for the school to punish him in the same way as it might do any other dishonest pupil. Unless it can be clear that the mother was also acting in bad faith (for example that she knew her son was lying) it would still be unlawful to victimise her for pursuing the complaint.