'They will soar on wings like eagles …'
Isaiah 40:31

collaborate | enrich | trust | innovate | aspire |nurture

AQUILA
Diocese of Canterbury
Academies Trust

Multi-Academy Trust Policy

Equalities Statement and Objectives

Date adopted by Trust Board: 05/2021

Date of next Review: 05/2023

Introduction

Through inclusive and innovative practice we nurture the Aquila family to provide exceptional learning experiences, enriching the lives of all in our unique communities. We aspire to excellence and this statement has been written to reflect our core values but specifically, Enrich, Trust and Aspire

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), part of the Equality Act, came into force in April 2011. It requires organisations to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.

The duty has a key role to play in making sure that fairness is at the heart of public bodies' work and that public services meet the needs of different groups. It covers a range of public bodies, including academies, schools, NHS organisations, government departments, local authorities, and police authorities.

The duty replaces the three former duties that required government departments, local authorities and other public bodies to take into account sex, race and disability equality both as employers and when making policy decisions and delivering services. The duty standardises this requirement and also extends it to coverage, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 puts various requirements on academies when exercising their functions. The general duty requires academies to have due regard to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having "due regard" is defined by the duty as the need to advance equality of opportunity involves considering the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- meet the needs of people with protected characteristics; and
- encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.

Fostering good relations involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by academies, such as:

- how they act as employers
- how they develop, evaluate and review policy
- how they design, deliver and evaluate services

- how they commission and procure from others.

Equality Statement

Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust (the trust) will ensure that equal opportunities and the principles of fairness underpin all aspects of policy, procedure, education provision, consultation and decision making.

The Trust is committed to equality in its delivery of education, whether or not the service is directly provided by us or contracted by the school to a third-party provider.

The Trust is committed to adopting the aims of the PSED in all schools and workplaces. We aim to provide high-quality education services, making sure services are easily accessible. We will improve what we do by continuing to consult with staff, students, parents and governors, their communities and partners about equalities issues. We will promote our equal opportunities policy in our contact with parents, staff, governors and external organisations.

We will make every effort in creating equality of opportunity to ensure they are accessible and fair to everyone. Every person has the right to be treated fairly, regardless of race, sex, sexuality, disability, age, culture, religion, nationality or caring responsibilities. Where necessary we will implement reasonable adjustments, or additional support, to ensure equality of access to education and suitable working environment.

Our staff and governors who are responsible for the delivery of our education provision will recognise diversity and demonstrate a proactive approach in their day-to-day work. They will ensure that everyone is treated fairly, recognising special needs and understanding differences. Behaviour will reach our high standards of conduct (staff and students) and the learning environment we provide will be safe and accessible for those studying and working.

The Trust will adhere to statutory Government legislation and give consideration to other relevant guidance, which aims to make sure that everyone is treated with equity.

Employment

Aquila is committed to ensuring that employees have equal access to jobs, training, and professional development opportunities.

Our Staff Handbook refers to the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010. By way of example, the Handbook includes policies addressing equal opportunities, harassment, equal pay, dignity at work and various family leave rights and also policies to raise concerns, for example, the grievance and whistleblowing policies.

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

All recruitment will be within the provisions of the Act, and applications will be monitored to report on recruitment activity, in line with the Act.

Age is a protected characteristic in relation to employment but does not apply to pupils in the academies/schools.

Employees who are in breach of our policies will be dealt with under the Trust's disciplinary policy where appropriate.

Pupil Provisions
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 students.

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.

Contractors and Service Providers
Each school will ensure that all service providers that are contracted to provide services to students, staff or visitors will comply with Equalities legislation.

Where services are deemed not to meet Trust/School standards, concerning equal opportunities and fairness, contracts may be terminated.

Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board are responsible for:

- Taking appropriate steps so that the Academies/Schools understand that they need to follow all of the Trust's equality and diversity policies and meets its legal responsibilities with respect to equality.

The Head Teacher/Executive Head is responsible for:

- Giving a consistent and high-profile lead on equality and diversity.
- Putting the Trust's equality and diversity policies into practice.
- Ensuring that all staff know their responsibilities and receive the support and training necessary to carry them out.
- Following the relevant procedures and acting in cases of unfair discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

All staff are responsible for:

- Promoting equality and diversity, and avoiding unfair discrimination.
- Actively responding to any incidents of unfair discrimination, related to protected characteristics perpetrated by students, other staff or visitors.
- Keeping up to date with equality law and participating in equal opportunities and diversity training.
- Complaints from parents, students and the community will be dealt with in line with the Trust's complaints procedure, and as such appropriate staff will deal with the relevant stage of the complaint.

Students are responsible for:

- Respecting others in their language and actions.
- Obeying all of the School equality and diversity policies.

<u>Objectives</u>

The following objectives are agreed by the Trust Board and form the basis of our commitment to the responsibilities outlined by the PSED;

1. Each academy will monitor and analyse pupil achievement and progress by ethnicity, sex and disability, and act on any trends or patterns in this data that identify the need for additional support for pupils with the aim of narrowing the gap for vulnerable groups.

2. Provide a secure environment in which all our children can flourish and achieve. We will do this using five key outcomes: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and enjoy economic well-being.

3. Ensure the curriculum at each school is broad and balanced, and reflect the importance of equalities and inclusivity

4. Improve our knowledge and understanding of issues of anti-discriminatory practice, promoting equality and valuing diversity

5. Adopt a Trust-wide HR information system that will incorporate the ability to provide robust reporting on and monitoring of equalities data relating to our staff and employees.

6. Develop our recruitment processes so that current and potential staff have equality of opportunity.

Complaints

The Trust will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful (or potentially unlawful) discrimination.
Any complaints will be investigated following the Trust's grievance or complaints policy, whichever is appropriate.