

Equality Policy

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Lead professional: CEO



Polaris
Multi-Academy Trust

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Trust Staff Member Responsible	CEO
School Staff Member Responsible	Head of School

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Equality Policy for Polaris Multi Academy Trust brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including those that we had previously for Race, Gender and Disability. It includes all the protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010 as well as other aspects, which have the potential to discriminate against or to devalue any individuals within our community. We are further committed to the development of cohesive communities both within our school's physical boundaries and within our local, national and global environments.

We welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010. The general duties are to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between groups

We welcome our responsibility to promote community cohesion and are committed to developing good relations across different cultures, ethnic, religious (and non-religious) and socio-economic groups. Our school embraces the aim of working together with others to improve children's educational and wellbeing outcomes, and notes the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Appropriate elements of this policy are included in the Equal Opportunities Policy appended to the staff handbook.

1.2 Over recent years, schools have (in line with other institutions and public bodies) been working towards an improved understanding of the diverse nature of their communities, and recognising their role in promoting an understanding of equality for different groups of people. Much of this work is in response to legislation that places an increased duty on schools and other settings, but it also sits within the specific context of a school's role in providing learning and opportunities for all - it is about fairness, rights and justice.

1.3 Equality legislation exists to protect people but also to try and advance equality. We know that some groups do less well than their peers in terms of progress, achievement and as a result, later life chances. This picture is reflected nationally. The recognition of diversity and promotion of inclusive and equality practices will help to overcome this disparity.

1.4 The Equality Act 2010 harmonises and streamlines legislation that has come before it. The Act refers to protected characteristics:

- Age (relevant to staff only in our context)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil Partnership (relevant to staff only in our context)

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on public bodies including maintained schools and Academies.

It also provides protection against discrimination to pupils / students who are pregnant or have recently given birth, or who are undergoing gender reassignment.

2. Model Equality Policy

The Board of Polaris Multi Academy Trust and the related Local Governing Bodies adopted this policy on 01 November 2021. The policy will be reviewed every four years to update the action plan.

3. Overall aims of our Equality Policy

3.1 To ensure that equality and inclusive practice are embedded across all aspects of school life the Equality Policy refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes recognition of a range of educational, wellbeing, and material outcomes.

3.2 Overall, our aim is:

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- To promote equality of access and opportunity within across our Trust, schools and within our wider community.
- To promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, genders, cultures, faiths, abilities and ethnic origins.

4. Application of the Policy

4.1 Our Equality Policy is inclusive of our whole Trust community – students, staff, parents/carers, visitors and partner agencies – with whom we have engaged and who will contribute to the ongoing development of our policy and equalities work.

4.2 The purpose of this Policy is to set out how our practice and policies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations between groups.

It explains how we aim to listen to and involve students, staff, parents and the community in achieving better outcomes for our children and young people.

5. Our approach

5.1 We seek to embed equality of access, opportunity and outcome for all members of our school community, within all aspects of school life.

5.2 We actively seek out opportunities to embrace the following key concepts:

- **Shared Humanity.** Identifying commonality and shared values, aspirations and needs underpins our approach to equality. We value our fundamental similarities and universality.
- **Valuing difference and diversity.** We appreciate the richness within our differences and look for ways of celebrating and understanding them better.
- **Interdependence, interaction and influence.** We recognise that, as they evolve, distinct cultures, beliefs and lifestyles will impact on and inform each other.
- **Social cohesion** within our school and within our local community.
- **Excellence.** We aim to inspire and recognise high personal and collective achievement throughout our community, the UK and the wider world. Excellence is to be found everywhere.
- **Conduct Equality Impact Assessments** of our functions and policies.
- **Personal and cultural identity.** We will provide opportunities to explore and value the complexity of our personal and cultural identities.
- **Fairness and social justice.** We will develop our understanding of the inequality that exists in society and explore ways of individually and collectively promoting a more equitable society.

6. Our vision statement about Equality

6.1 Our Trust seeks to foster warm, welcoming and respectful environments, which allow us to question and challenge discrimination and inequality, resolve conflicts peacefully and provide a culture that enables all parties to work and learn free from harassment and violence.

6.2 We recognise that there are similarities and differences between individuals and groups but we will strive to ensure that our differences do not become barriers to participation, access and learning and to create inclusive processes and practices, where the varying needs of individuals and groups are identified and met. We therefore cannot achieve equality for all by treating everyone the same.

6.3 We will build on our similarities and seek enrichment from our differences and so promote understanding and learning between and towards others to create cohesive communities.

7. Our Duties

7.1 We recognise and accept our equality duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and will seek to involve the whole Trust community in the process in order to ensure better outcomes for all. We are also guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

7.2 We will ensure we identify opportunities for promoting our vision, the key concepts and our duties on equality legislation across all aspects of Trust and school life, including the provision of extended services.

7.3 These opportunities may include all or some of the following, dependent on our current priorities:

- The engagement, participation and involvement of a broad and diverse range of children, young people, their parents and partner agencies.
- Preparation for entry to the school.
- School and Trust policies.
- Breaks and lunchtimes.
- The provision of school meals.
- Interaction with peers.
- Opportunities for assessment and accreditation.
- Exam arrangements.
- Behaviour management approach and sanctions.
- Exclusion procedures.
- School clubs, activities and school trips.
- The Trust and school's arrangements for working with other agencies.
- Preparation of pupils / students for the next phase of education.
- Learning and teaching and the planned curriculum.
- Classroom organisation.
- Timetabling.
- Grouping of students.
- Homework.
- Access to Trust and school facilities.
- Activities to enrich the curriculum.
- School sports.
- Employees' and staff welfare.

8. Roles and Responsibilities within our School

8.1 Our CEO and through delegated authority the Heads of School are responsible for the implementation of the Policy and will ensure that staff and others mentioned as follows are aware of their responsibilities and they are given necessary training and support. The CEO and Heads of School will carry out this responsibility by:

- Ensuring that the Board, LGBs, all staff, parents/carers, students, visitors and contractors are engaged in the development of and informed about the Equality Policy.
- Overseeing the effective implementation of the policy.
- Ensuring staff have access to training which helps to implement the policy.
- Developing partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that the school's actions are in line with the best advice available.
- Monitoring the policy and reporting to the Board and LGB annually on the effectiveness of the policy and publish this information.
- Ensuring that the Heads of School across the Trust are kept up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it.
- Ensuring that Equality Impact Assessments are conducted on functions and policies.

8.2 Our Board is responsible for ensuring that the Trust and schools within it comply with statutory requirements in respect of this policy and will:

- Directors have a clear understanding that they are individually responsible for the proper application and support of the implementation of this policy.
- Ensure that the objectives arising from the policy are part of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). This is specifically addressed by initiatives aimed at closing the gap in achievement between cohorts.
- Support the CEO in implementing any actions necessary.
- Engage with parents and partner agencies about the policy through school to home communication signposting to the website.
- Evaluate and review the Policy and Action Plan every three years.

8.3 Our CEO and Heads of School will:

- Have responsibility for supporting other staff in implementing this Policy.
- Provide a lead in the dissemination of information relating to the Policy.
- With the Trust HR team, provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues.
- Assist in implementing reviews of this policy as required.

8.4 Our pupils / students will:

- Understand how it relates to them, appropriate to age and ability.
- Be expected to act in accordance with the Policy.
- Be encouraged to actively support the Policy.

8.5 Our parents/carers will:

- Have access to the Policy through a range of different media appropriate to their requirements including the website.
- Be encouraged to actively support the Policy.
- Be informed of any incident related to this Policy which could directly affect their child.

8.6 Our staff ie, every adult working within the academy, will:

- Promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in Trust and its schools, challenge inappropriate language and behaviour, respond appropriately to incidents of discrimination and harassment, ensure appropriate support for pupils / students with additional needs and maintain a good awareness of equalities issues.
- Be involved in the development of the Policy and how it relates to them through discussions at JCC (Joint Consultative Committee for union representatives within school/s).

8.7 Relevant voluntary or community groups and partner agencies will:

- Be encouraged to support the Policy
- Be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy

8.8 Our Curriculum will:

- Ensure that curriculum planning reflects our commitment to equality in all subject areas and cross-curricular themes promoting positive attitudes to equality and diversity.
- Ensure the classroom is an inclusive environment in which students feel their contributions are valued.
- Ensure positive steps are taken to include students who may otherwise be marginalized. We take account of students' cultural backgrounds, experiences and starting points and are responsive to pupils / students' different learning styles. All pupils / students are regularly consulted about their learning.

The school recognises and values all forms of achievement. We will monitor and analyse student performance by ethnicity, gender, disability and special educational need and social background. Any disparities, which are identified, will be addressed through targeted curriculum planning, teaching and support. Any funding received to promote learning for identified groups, eg those entitled to free school meals or not achieving desired level of attainment will be targeted to these groups. We will use our Management Information Systems (MIS) to identify and monitor these students.

9. Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) & using information

9.1 We will use data and other information about our school, and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) as a common sense measure to determine the effects of a policy, practice or project on different groups. EQIAs help us to analyse whether what we are planning potentially has a differential impact on one or more particular group (either positively or negatively). They help us to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against certain individuals or groups and that the positive duties are promoted. They help to ensure we meet the diverse needs of our pupils / students and staff and that diversity, equality and inclusion run through all areas of school life.

10. Commissioned services (buying in services)

10.1 We are directly responsible for the purchase of goods and services and we will ensure that equality issues are given full regard. When buying goods and services from suppliers, we will ask the following questions of ourselves to help ensure that equality issues and duties are taken into account:

- Could the proposed procurement affect the duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity amongst the school community?
- If so, is there a need to include some equality requirement within the contract and what would this be?

10.2 We will ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our equality policy and we require similar compliance by any sub-contractors. In reality this is very hard to achieve.

11. Our Staff

11.1 We value our staff for their ability and potential to help us make the best possible provision for the children in our Trust and its schools. Our policies and programmes benefit all members of staff in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- Whether or not they are disabled.
- Whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation and faith, national origin or national status.
- Whatever their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Irrespective of other factors such as age, income, family circumstances or where they live.

We will comply fully with legislation, which protects our staff from discrimination based on the protected characteristics. With regard to disability, we will make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a disabled person being at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with people who are not disabled.

This includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, training and employment practices and disciplinary procedures. We make efforts to ensure that the diversity of our workforce reflects that of our local community and wider society. In accordance with the Equality Act we do not enquire about the health of an applicant until a job offer has been made or require job applicants to complete a generic 'all encompassing' health questionnaire as part of the application procedure prior to interview and selection.

11.2 We will ensure the safety and well-being of our staff, and take seriously and act on incidents of harassment and discrimination recognising that our staff may be either victims or perpetrators.

11.3 We interpret our duties positively; take the necessary actions to remove barriers to inclusion and work hard to ensure a safe, positive and inclusive environment.

11.4 We will ensure that our staff receive diversity training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as a group to help them understand their equality duties/and or the differing needs of protected groups within our school community. We have mechanisms in place to identify areas for development through the school's CPD programme; particularly the elements of training focused on the development of SMSC.

Religious Observance

11.5 We respect the religious beliefs and practices of all staff, students and their parents and carers and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

12. Responding to hate or prejudice-based incidents and bullying

12.1 Clear procedures are in place so that all forms of bullying and harassment are dealt with promptly, firmly and consistently. All forms of bullying and harassment are recorded, monitored and dealt with in line with relevant policies. We recognise that hate incidents or prejudice –based bullying behaviour are driven by negative assumptions, stereotypes or misinformation. These are then directed against an individual or group, based on difference (real or perceived), and linked to, for example, racism, homophobia, negative views of disabled people, sexism and other forms of discrimination. We will take action to prevent, challenge and eliminate any such behaviour.

12.2 We recognise that we as individuals and society often struggle with difference of any kind (perceived or actual), which can result in seizing upon the most visible sign of difference e.g. skin colour or disability.

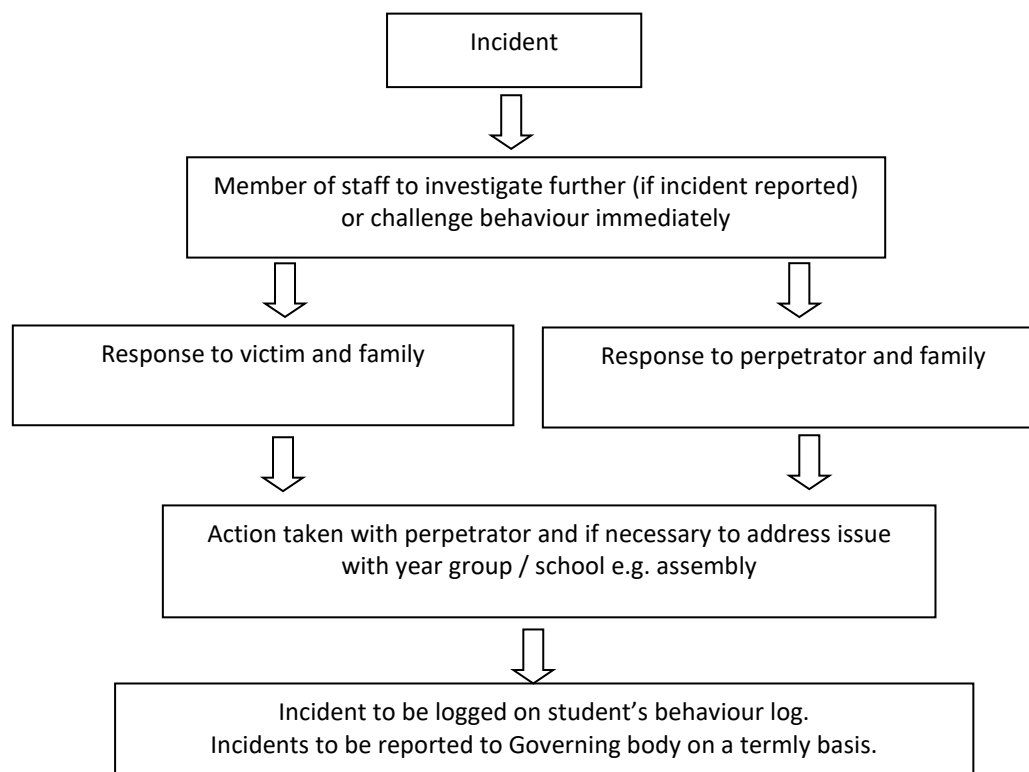
12.3 Through our school ethos and curriculum, we want our students to understand better the diversity that exists in society. We want to provide opportunities for them to explore the subtleties and complexities of human relationships in order to prevent and respond to incidents and situations. We will address the experience, understanding and needs of the victim, the perpetrator, bystanders and the wider Trust and school community through our actions and responses.

12.4 We will keep a record of hate and prejudice-related incidents and where requested by an appropriate authority can provide a report about the numbers, types and seriousness of these incidents and how they are dealt with.

12.5 We will use this information to identify trends and patterns, so that we have approaches in place to provide appropriate responses in terms of support for victims and their families, sanctions and support for perpetrators and their families and education for our children, young people and communities.

12.6 It should be clear to pupils / students and staff how they report incidents. All staff should view dealing with incidents as vital to the well-being of the whole school.

The procedure for responding and reporting is outlined below:



13. Implementation, monitoring and reviewing

13.1 Implementation, monitoring and review are the responsibility of our CEO, Heads of School and our Trust Directors who have agreed and published this policy, which sets out our priorities and supports these with specific and measurable objectives.

13.2 We will report annually on the policy and analyse whether our policy and related objectives have furthered the aims of the general equality duty and in particular educational outcomes for all within our school community with reference to the protected groups.

14. Equality Objectives – Our Equality Action Plan

14.1 This policy and plan will be published on our Trust and school's websites and hard copies will be available from the Trust and school's office. We will ensure that the content of this policy is known to all directors and staff and as appropriate to all students and their parents and carers.

14.2 All directors and staff will have access to a range of resources that discuss and explain the concepts of equality, diversity and community cohesion. A range of resources is identified at the end of the action plan.

14.3 Using the views of pupils / students, parents, staff and community and analysis of available information above we will set ourselves specific and measurable objectives that will help us achieve the aims of the general equality duty.

14.4 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended by the CEO at any time.

Equality Strand	Action	How will the impact of the action be monitored?	Who is responsible for implementing?	What are the timeframes?	Early success indicators
All	Publish and promote the Equality Plan through the Trust and school website and staff meetings.	Analysis of visits to the Equality Policy page on the website	CEO	Reminder to staff through the publication to all staff of the staff handbook annually	Staff are familiar with the principles of the Equality Plan and use them when planning lessons, creating class room displays Parents are aware of the Equality Plan
All	Monitor and analyse student achievement by race, gender, economic background and disability and act on any trends or patterns in the data that require additional support for pupils / students.	Achievement data analysed by race, gender, economic background and disability	CEO, Head of School, LGBs	Key elements picked up in the Head of School reports to the LGBs 3 times a year	Analysis of teacher assessments / annual data demonstrates the gap is narrowing for equality groups
All	Monitor and analyse student attendance and persistent absenteeism by race, gender, economic background and disability and act on any trends or patterns in the data that require additional support for pupils / students.	Attendance data analysed by race, gender, economic background and disability	CEO, Head of School, LGBs	Key elements picked up in the Head of School reports to the LGBs 3 times a year	Analysis of Attendance Data demonstrates that students in these cohorts are not disproportionately represented in PA category
All	Ensure that the curriculum promotes role models that young people positively identify with,	Increase in pupils' / students' participation, confidence and achievement	Heads of School and LGBs	Through at academic standards review led by the Trust 3 times a year	Notable increase in participation and confidence of targeted groups

Equality Strand	Action	How will the impact of the action be monitored?	Who is responsible for implementing?	What are the timeframes?	Early success indicators
	which reflects the school's diversity in terms of race, gender, economic background and disability.	levels			
All	Ensure that displays in classrooms and corridors promote diversity in terms of race, gender and ethnicity.	Increase in pupil / student participation, confidence and positive identity – monitor through Pastoral Curriculum	Head of School	Ongoing	More diversity reflected in school displays across all year groups
All	Ensure all students are given the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the life of the school e.g. through involvement in the Student Leadership Programme / School Council by election or co-option), class assemblies, fund raising etc.	Student Leadership representation monitored by race, gender, disability	Head of School	Annual recruitment of student leaders / school council	More diversity in school council membership
All	Ensure all pupils / students from low income families are given the opportunity to achieve at a similar level to the remainder of the pupils / students.	This is funded specifically through Pupil Premium Plan and review cycle.	Head of School	Through at academic standards review led by the Trust 3 times a year	Awareness raised and the gap between the cohorts reduced.
Race Equality Duty	Identify, respond and report racist incidents as outlined in the Plan. Report the figures to	The Head of School will use the data to assess the impact of the school's response to	Head of School	Head of School reports once a year (July)	Teaching staff are aware of and respond to racist incidents Consistent nil reporting is

Equality Strand	Action	How will the impact of the action be monitored?	Who is responsible for implementing?	What are the timeframes?	Early success indicators
	the LGB on a termly basis.	incidents eg have whole school / year group approaches led to a decrease in incidents, can repeat perpetrators be identified, are students and parents satisfied with the response?			challenged by the LGB
Improve delivery of information	Improve the delivery to disabled pupils / students of information that is provided in writing for students who are not disabled	EHC plans reflect support needs and are monitored annually	Head of School SENCo	Information / policy change based on the results of a 4 year review cycle	Information such as newsletters, notices, worksheets etc are available in the appropriate

Sources of further information:

Academy Equality Impact Statements

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/legislation/equality-act-2010/equality-act-codes-practice-and-technical-guidance>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/discrimination/about-discrimination/equality-act-2010-discrimination-and-your-rights/>

<http://www.acas.org.uk/equalityact>

[Diversity and Inclusion strategy SCREEN.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)