



Quality First Education Trust

Accessibility and Equality Policy

Approved by Board of Trustees on: 21st March 2019

Policy in effect from: 1st April 2019

Next scheduled review: Spring term 2022

This policy is reviewed every three years by the board of trustees.

The accompanying equality objectives and accessibility plan for each school in the trust will be reviewed annually by the local governing body.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Quality First Education Trust is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and celebration of diversity in respect of our pupils, staff, parents and carers. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the schools feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.

We are also committed to identifying and dealing pro-actively with institutional barriers to equality. As well as dealing effectively with equality related issues as they arise, we will also work to challenge bullying and stereotyping and creating an environment which champions respect for all.

This policy sets out the ways in which the trust and our schools operate equality of opportunity in our day to day practice.

1.2 Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 protects the following characteristics, known as “protected characteristics”:

- Gender, maternity and pregnancy
- Race, ethnicity or nationality
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Religion and belief
- Sexuality
- Age
- Marital status

1.3 Linked policies

This policy should be considered in conjunction with:

- The Accessibility and Equality Plan (specific to each school in the trust)

Other related policies include:

- Q1E Safeguarding Policy
- Q1E Health and Safety Policy
- Q1E Medical Needs Policy
- Q1E Whistleblowing Policy
- Q1E Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Q1E Recruitment Policy
- School Anti-Bullying Policy
- School Behaviour Policy

2.0 Teaching and Learning

We aim to provide all our pupils with the opportunity to succeed and to reach their potential for personal achievement. To do this we will:

- i. Use contextual data to improve the ways in which we provide support to individuals and groups of pupils
- ii. Monitor achievement data by ethnicity, gender and disability and identify, investigate and where appropriate, put resource into remedying gaps
- iii. Ensure equality of access for all pupils
- iv. Prepare pupils for life in a diverse society
- v. Use materials that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender and disability without stereotyping
- vi. Promote attitudes and values that will challenge discriminatory behaviour, bullying or prejudice
- vii. Provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures
- viii. Encourage classroom and staffroom discussion of equality issues which reflect on social stereotypes, expectations and the impact on learning

3.0 Admissions and exclusions

Our admissions policy is can be found on the school website. This is written following best practice guidance from equality legislation based in the Equality Act 2010.

Exclusions will always be based on the behaviour policy. We will annually review whether one or more groups with a particular characteristic is overrepresented and if so, this will be investigated to ensure against conscious or unconscious discrimination.

4.0 Staff

We will always comply with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 when appointing staff. Recruitment methods will ensure that appointments are based on merit and ability. For instance, we will use a shortlisting procedure which rates candidates against the competencies of the job and those addressed in their applications.

We will monitor appointments and promotions to ensure that no groups with a particular protected characteristic appear to be disadvantaged through conscious or unconscious prejudice or discrimination. Where particular groups appear to be underrepresented in comparison with the local community, we will investigate this, and may take steps to attract applicants from particular groups, subject always to the requirements from the Equality Act.

Bullying and harassment of staff on any grounds whatsoever will not be tolerated and the disciplinary procedure will be instigated wherever an initial investigation decides that there is a case to answer.

It is usually unlawful to ask applicants about their health prior to appointment, so health questionnaires will not be issued to applicants and any health related questions will be only those that are targeted, necessary and related to the job.

5.0 Equality and the law

The duties that the school has are as follows:

5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty

This requires the school to take positive steps to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity between those with protected characteristics and those who do not share it; and to foster good relations.

With the PSED, as with the previous general duties, schools are subject to the need to have due regard to the three elements outlined above. What having "due regard" means in practice has been defined in case law and means giving relevant and proportionate consideration to the duty. For schools this means:

- Decision makers in schools must be aware of the duty to have "due regard" when making a decision or taking an action and must assess whether it may have particular implications for people with particular protected characteristics.
- Schools should consider equality implications before and at the time that they develop policy and make decisions, not as an afterthought, and they need to keep them under review on a continuing basis.
- The PSED has to be integrated into the carrying out of the school's functions, and the analysis necessary to comply with the duty has to be carried out seriously, rigorously and with an open mind – it is not just a question of ticking boxes or following a particular process.
- Schools can't delegate responsibility for carrying out the duty to anyone else.

The school is required to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the PSED and must also prepare and publish equality objectives.

5.2 Equality and Accessibility Plan

The Equality Act 2010 requires the school to have an Equality and Accessibility Plan which must show how the school is:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of schools to enable those with disabilities to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- improving the availability of accessible information to those with disabilities.

The plan for each school is available on the school website.

5.3 Equality Act non-discrimination provisions and duty to provide auxiliary aids

In respect of students and staff, the school may not treat a person less favourably because of a protected characteristic, or apply a policy or practice which has a discriminatory effect and is not justified. In addition, harassment based on protected characteristics is unlawful, as is victimisation (that is, unfavourable treatment) of those who complain about discrimination or breaches of the Act.

Finally, the school must make reasonable adjustments to policies, criteria and practices for disabled students and staff, so that barriers to access to the school (or workplace) are tackled. Auxiliary aids (that is, specialist equipment) must be provided where it is reasonable for the school to do so in light of factors such as cost and practicability.

6.0 Raising and reporting incidents of discrimination or potential equality issues

The trust will always take incidents or allegations of discrimination seriously.

Staff: Concerns or complaints from staff (grievances) should be raised with their line manager in the first instance. If the concern relates to safeguarding, staff should refer to the Q1E Safeguarding Policy. Staff also have the option of raising issues through the whistleblowing procedure and should refer to the Q1E Whistleblowing Policy.

Parents/carers: Parents/carers who wish to raise a concern regarding an accessibility or equality matter, or a specific equality related incident, should follow the procedure set out in the Q1E Concerns and Complaints Policy. In the first instance, any concern should be discussed with the member of staff most closely associated with the incident (for example the class teacher).

Children: Bullying and peer on peer abuse can often be related to protected characteristics (see section 1.2). Equality related incidents between pupils will be dealt with in line with the school behaviour policy, and where appropriate the anti-bullying policy. Children in all schools should be aware of members of staff they can speak to about any concern. Bullying for any reason will not be tolerated and incidents will always be investigated appropriately and recorded.