



Equality Plan

2024-2027

Approved: Spring 2025

Single Equality Scheme 2024-2027

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Statement of intent

Oak Learning Trust is committed to open and honest communication, ensuring the highest possible standards in integrity – we will always treat whistleblowing as a serious matter. In line with the trust’s commitment to openness, probity and accountability, members of staff are encouraged to report concerns. This policy will work to ensure that, if an employee sees or suspects that something is wrong, they will raise this with the trust. This is known as “blowing the whistle” – a phrase that is used throughout this policy and should be viewed as a positive action of speaking up. This policy seeks to ensure that any member of staff who suspects malpractice knows how to raise concerns and what procedures are in place to deal with the concern. Where this policy necessitates personal or special category data to be processed, it will be done so in accordance with the trust’s Data Protection Policy

1. Mission statement

Oak Learning Trust is a multi-academy trust based in the North East of England. We currently have seven schools in our Trust and have supported a number of schools in their school improvement journey.

Our vision at Oak Learning Trust is to support our schools to provide outstanding education for children every day, to develop our staff to be the best that they can be and to create a positive and supportive learning environment where everyone can thrive and enjoy learning.

The Trust Board and Senior Leadership Teams at Oak Learning Trust are passionate about ensuring that all children in schools within the Trust receive the best possible education to allow them to reach their full potential in all areas of their lives. Because of this we ensure that all of our schools focus not only on excellent academic achievement for all but that we provide an exciting and enriched curriculum. This will include visits to and working with theatres, museums and galleries, with opportunities for performance and drama, excellent music tuition and successful sports engagement within the curriculum and through out of school clubs. Our forest school programme helps our children develop investigative and problem-solving skills as well as developing resilience and the ability to work with friends and peers.

Our staff are friendly, knowledgeable and extremely committed to improving the lives and outcomes of children within the Trust. There is extensive collaborative practice across the Trust at all levels with staff sharing ideas and resources as well as meeting together on a regular basis to plan joint work and projects. This creates a strong bond between schools and supports staff development which then leads into school development.

Although we have a strong ethos of high standards and high expectations, we also believe that every school within the Trust should be an individual. The communities that each school serves will be different and the staff within each school will bring different interests and experiences. By harnessing all of these we ensure that the school is individual and the best it can be for its own community while the Governing Body, Headteacher/Head of School and Senior Leadership Team of each school ensures that each child is able to achieve his or her academic potential.

Staff are supported to develop their own interests and passions to provide new opportunities for our children and we are keen to share good practice across the Trust in any areas that might be of benefit to our children.

At Oak Learning Trust, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, gender, disability, faith or religion or socio-economic background. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.

The achievement of pupils will be monitored by race, gender and disability. We will use this data to support pupils, raise standards and ensure inclusive teaching. We will tackle discrimination by the positive promotion of equality, challenging bullying and stereotypes and creating an environment which champions respect for all.

At Oak Learning Trust, we believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

We believe that the Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 and the Children and Families Act 2014, provide a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (1989), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006), the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Equality Act 2010.

2. Equality into policy and practice

As well as the specific actions set out in our plan, the school operates equality of opportunity in its day-to-day practice in the following ways.

Teaching and learning

We aim to provide all our pupils with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement. To do this, we will:

- Use contextual data to improve the ways in which we provide support to individuals and groups of pupils
- Monitor achievement data by ethnicity, gender and disability and action any gaps
- Take account of the achievement of all pupils when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets
- Ensure equality of access for all pupils and prepare them for life in a diverse society
- Use materials that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender and disability, without stereotyping
- Promote attitudes and values that will challenge racist and other discriminatory behaviour or prejudice
- Provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures
- Seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education
- Encouraging classroom and staffroom discussion of equality issues which reflect on social stereotypes, expectations and the impact on learning

- Including teaching and classroom-based approaches appropriate for the whole trust population, which are inclusive and reflective of our pupils

Admissions, suspensions and exclusions

Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and do not discriminate on race, gender, disability or socio-economic factors. See Trust admissions policy.

Fixed term suspensions and exclusions will always be based on the school's Behaviour Policy. We will closely monitor suspensions and exclusions to avoid any potential adverse impact and ensure any discrepancies are identified and dealt with.

Admission The Treehouse ARP (Additionally Resourced Provision), is determined through Together for Children Sunderland. There is specific entry criteria for the Treehouse including having an EHCP and working at Range 4b, with a prime need of ASD.

3. Equal Opportunities for Staff

This section deals with aspects of equal opportunities relating to staff at Oak Learning Trust.

We are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment.

All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law.

Employer duties - As an employer we need to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce.

Equality aspects such as gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment and faith or religion are considered when appointing staff and when allocating Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLR) or re-evaluating staff structures, to ensure decisions are free of discrimination.

Actions to ensure this commitment is met include:

- Monitoring recruitment and retention including bullying and harassment of staff
- Continued professional development opportunities for all staff
- Senior Leadership Team support to ensure equality of opportunity for all

4. Equality and the law

Schools need to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which places a requirement on public authorities, including schools, to consciously consider how their policies or decisions affect people who share protected characteristics. This refers to aspects of a person's identity that are protected under the Equality Act 2010, identified below.

The equality duty detailed in the Equality Act 2010 has 3 main aims:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. Advanced equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

4a. Race Equality

This section of the plan reflects the general and specific duties of schools as detailed in Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) – guidance for public authorities.

The General Race Equality Duty requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations between people of different racial groups

Under our specific duty we will:

- Prepare an Equality Action Plan which reflects our policy for inclusion
- Assess the impact of our policies, including this plan, on pupils, staff and parents by ethnicity including, in particular, the achievement levels of these pupils
- Monitor the impact our plans and policies have on such pupils, staff and parents towards raising the achievement of minority ethnic groups

4b. Disability

This section should be read in conjunction with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy, Inclusion Policy and Accessibility Plan.

Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 is:

'...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

This definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer.

Legal duties

The Equality Act 2010 placed a general duty on schools, requiring them to make reasonable adjustments for the following when carrying out and delivering services:

- Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- Eliminating discrimination and harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encouraging participation in public life by disabled people
- Taking steps to meet disabled people's needs

Under our specific duty we will:

- Prepare and publish an Accessibility Plan which covers the requirements for a Disability Equality Scheme identifying our disability equality goals and actions to meet them
- Review and revise this scheme every three years

4c. Gender Equality

The Gender Equality Duty (GED), which came into effect in 2007, places a general and specific duty on schools to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender and to promote equality of opportunity between female and male pupils and between women and men and transgender people, this was reinforced in the Equality Act 2010.

Under our general duty we will actively seek to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on grounds of sex and gender reassignment
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act 1970
- Promote equality between men and women

Under our specific duty we will:

- Prepare and publish an Equality Action Plan which covers the requirements for a Gender Equality Scheme identifying our gender equality goals and actions to meet them.
- Review and revise this scheme every three years.

4d. Sexual Orientation

The Equality Act 2010 made provision for regulations to be introduced to extend protection against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief to sexual orientation.

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2006 make discrimination unlawful in the area of goods, facilities and services on grounds of sexual orientation. For schools this means admissions, benefits and services for pupils and treatment of pupils.

4e. Religion or Belief

The Equality Act (2010) states that religion means any religion and a reference to religion. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief. The Equality Act (2010) places a duty on schools to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation of people on the grounds of religion or belief.

At Oak Learning Trust we will actively seek to:

- Eliminate discrimination (direct and indirect), harassment and victimisation on the grounds of religion or belief
- Promote equality of opportunity to people of different religions and beliefs
- Promote good relations between people of different religions and beliefs

Community Cohesion

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to the Education Act 2002, introducing a duty on schools to promote community cohesion. Community cohesion encompasses promoting good relations between pupils from different races, faiths / beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds. This was reinforced in The Equality Act 2010.

At Oak Learning Trust we will actively seek to:

- Work together with local community groups and organisations
- Conduct whole school events – inviting parents/carers and other stakeholders
- Maintain regular and effective lines of communication between pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and the school's wider community
- Participate in local events
- Invite individuals of all ages and genders, people with disabilities and people from different races, religion or beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds to get involved in school activities and events

5. Consultation and involvement

It is a requirement that the development of this plan and the actions within it have been informed by the input of staff, pupils and parents and carers. We have achieved this by using the following to shape the plan:

- Feedback from parent questionnaires and parents' evening
- Discussions staff meetings / INSET

- Feedback from the school council, PSHE or Personal Learning Plan (PLP) whole school surveys on children's attitudes to self and school
- Issues raised in annual reviews - EHCPs or reviews of progress on PLPs or interventions, mentoring and support
- Consultation with The Board of Trustees

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Board of Trustees

- The Board of Trustees has set out its commitment to equal opportunities in this plan and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that the schools in the trust are fully inclusive to pupils, and responsive to their needs based on race, gender and disability.
- The Board seeks to ensure that people are not discriminated against when applying for jobs at our schools on grounds of race, gender or disability.
- The Board take all reasonable steps to ensure that the environment of schools in the trust give access to people with disabilities, and also strive to make school communications as inclusive as possible for parents, carers and pupils.
- The Trustees welcome all applications to join the school, whatever a child's socio-economic background, race, gender or disability.
- The Board ensures that no child is discriminated against whilst in our school on account of their race, sex or disability.

The role of the Chief Executive Officer

- It is the Chief Executive Officer's role to implement the Trust's Equality Plan in all three schools
- The Chief Executive Officer will monitor the implementation of the Equality Plan
- The Heads of School, the schools' governing bodies and all staff will be supported and guided by the Chief Executive Officer as required

The role of the Headteacher/Head of School

- It is the Headteacher/Head of School's role to support the Chief Executive Officer to implement the school's Equality Plan
- It is the Headteacher/Head of School's role to ensure that all staff are aware of the Equality Plan, and that teachers apply these guidelines fairly in all situations
- The Headteacher/Head of School ensures that all appointments panels give due regard to this plan, so that no-one is discriminated against when it comes to employment or training opportunities
- The Headteacher/Head of School promotes the principle of equal opportunity and British Values when developing the curriculum, and promotes respect for other people and equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life
- The Headteacher/Head of School supported by SLT and all staff deal with all incidents of unfair treatment and any incidents of bullying or discrimination, including racist incidents, with due seriousness
- The Headteacher/Head of School is supported on a day to day basis by the Senior Leadership Team

The role of all staff: teaching and non-teaching

- All staff will ensure that all pupils are treated fairly, equally and with respect, and will maintain awareness of the school's Equality Plan
- All staff will strive to provide material that gives positive images based on race, gender and disability, and challenges stereotypical images
- All staff will challenge any incidents of prejudice, racism or homophobia, and record any serious incidents, drawing them to the attention of the Head of School
- Teachers support the work of support staff and encourage them to intervene in a positive way against any discriminatory incidents

The role of pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others and to treat others with respect, to feel valued, and to speak out if they are subject to or witness any discriminatory behaviour. Pupils will have opportunities through discussions in class, assemblies and visits from relevant agencies to be aware of what discrimination is and what they should do if they see it or experience it.

7. Tackling discrimination

Harassment related to race, gender, disability or sexual orientation is unacceptable and is not tolerated within the school environment. It should be clear to pupils, and staff how they report incidents. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should view dealing with incidents as vital to the wellbeing of the whole school.

Responding to and reporting incidents - all staff are expected to deal with any discriminatory incidents that may occur. They are expected to know how to identify and challenge prejudice and stereotyping; and to support the full range of diverse needs according to a pupil's individual circumstances.

Racist and homophobic incidents and other incidents of harassment or bullying are dealt with by the member of staff present, escalating to a class teacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team and Head of School where necessary. All incidents must be reported to the Head of School and recorded in line with trust policy and procedures on the correct forms.

What is a discriminatory incident?

Harassment on grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or other factors such as socio-economic status, can take many forms including verbal or physical abuse, and other behaviours that contravene school policies. Types of discriminatory incidents that can occur are:

- Physical assault against a person or group because of their colour, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender
- Use of derogatory names, insults and jokes
- Racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory graffiti
- Provocative behaviour such as wearing racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory badges or insignia
- Bringing discriminatory material into school
- Verbal abuse and threats
- Incitement of others to discriminate or bully due to victim's race, disability, gender or sexual orientation
- Discriminatory comments in the course of discussion
- Attempts to recruit others to discriminatory organisations and groups
- Ridicule of an individual for difference e.g. food, music, religion, dress etc
- Refusal to co-operate with other people on grounds of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation

8. Review of progress and impact

The plan has been agreed by our Board of Trustees. We have a rolling programme for reviewing our school policies and their impact. In line with legislative requirements, we will review progress against our Equality Plan annually and review the entire plan and accompanying action plan on a three-year cycle.

We make regular assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to track pupil progress. As part of this process, we regularly monitor achievement by ethnicity, gender and disability, to ensure that all groups of pupils are making the best possible progress, and take appropriate action to address any gaps.

9. Publishing the plan

Although there is no longer a requirement to publish a plan to meet statutory requirements, JFK have decided to:

- Produce a three-year action plan
- Publish our plan on the school website
- Raise awareness of the plan through, assemblies, staff meetings and other communications
- Make sure hard copies are available