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# Single Equality Policy and Accessibility Plan

## **Introduction**

Ad Astra Academy Trust recognises and embraces the fact that everyone within our school community is unique. We seek to ensure that everyone reaches their full potential and as such we believe that everyone has the right to equality of opportunity. We seek to ensure that this philosophy permeates every aspect of school life.

### **1. Focus**

The focus of this policy is to ensure that the culture in school is one where every member of the Academy Trust family feels safe and secure in the knowledge that discrimination in any form will not be tolerated and will be challenged at every level. We will seek to ensure that no one will experience discrimination as a result of;

- Sex
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity

These are known as 'protected characteristics' as highlighted in the Equality Act 2010. However at Ad Astra Academy Trust we also believe that because of the deprived characteristics of some of our local communities and consequently the challenging circumstances that many of our children face, we will also ensure that no one will experience discrimination due to their socio-economic background or family circumstances.

### **2. Principles**

The principles which underpin and shape this policy are;

- We will continue to embrace and celebrate our strong inclusion culture.
- We will actively promote the philosophy that everyone in life is equal.
- Through positive educational experiences we aim to promote positive social attitudes and respect for all.
- Discrimination in any form will not be tolerated and positive action will be taken to address it.
- All pupils will have equal access to the full range of educational opportunities provided by the school.
- We will ensure that all recruitment, employment, promotion and training opportunities are conducted fairly.
- Prejudice and stereotypical views and opinions will be challenged at all times.
- Diversity will be celebrated.
- We will consult and involve stakeholders in the development of equality policies to ensure accountability and transparency.
- Inequality and barriers to equality are identified and reduced.

These principles apply to all school stakeholders including, children, parents, staff, governors, volunteers and visitors. Indeed anyone associated with the Academy Trust is expected to adhere to the principles outlines above.

### **3. Legislation**

Our commitment to equality is reinforced by our duty to comply with equality legislation.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all previous equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act. The Equality Act 2010 provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It has simplified the law by removing anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time in existing legislation and extended the protection from discrimination in certain areas.

Whilst we are bound by our legislative duty, we also believe that it is our moral duty and purpose to ensure that our equality philosophy forms an integral part of our academic, pastoral, leadership and management functions that form the foundations of our Trust.

Ad Astra Academy Trust welcomes any other legislation or amendment to existing legislation that seeks to further reinforce the duty of equality of opportunity for all.

The Equality Act also introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and Academies and which extends to all protected characteristics. This duty has three main elements;

In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to;

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations across all characteristics between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

What having 'due regard' means in practice has been defined in case law and means giving relevant and proportionate consideration to the duty. For Ad Astra Academy Trust this means;

- Anyone who is responsible for making decisions in school 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 implications for people with protected characteristics.
- Equality implications must be considered before and at the time that policies are developed and not as an afterthought. They need to be kept under review on a continuing basis.
- The PSED has to be integrated into the carrying out of our 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.
- We cannot delegate the responsibility for carrying out our duty to anyone else.

### **4. Safeguarding**

As is the case for every school, Ad Astra Academy Trust is bound by protocols and procedures in cases where we suspect a child is being abused. Parents need to be aware that we have a duty to act to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all of our children if we suspect a child is being ill-treated or neglected. All staff

are aware of the responsibility to inform the school designated officers who in turn will inform the relevant Local Authority. When a school refers a concern about a pupil to the Local Authority it is not accusing parents of abuse but is requesting that further investigation takes place to establish whether the child is at risk.

## **5. Implementation**

We will ensure implementation of this policy through action in the following areas;

- **Relationships and ethos**

To foster behaviour based on rights, responsibilities and mutual respect between all members of the school community, to support pupils' personal development and well-being, to address all forms of prejudice related bullying.

- **Equity and excellence**

To ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest possible level possible, removing barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities and minimising variations in outcomes for different groups.

- **Teaching, learning and curriculum**

To teach pupils to understand others, to promote common values and value diversity, to promote awareness of human rights and of the responsibility to uphold and defend them, and to develop the skills of participation and responsible action.

- **Engagement and extended services**

To provide a means for children, young people and their families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations, including links with different school communities locally, across the country and internationally.

## **6. Monitoring, Review and Impact Assessment**

This policy will be regularly reviewed by staff, governors and Trustees to ensure that it is effective in tackling discrimination, promoting access and participation and equality between different groups. All Trust and individual school policies will be impact assessed on a rolling programme to ensure that they meet our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

Everyone who is associated with Ad Astra Academy Trust is responsible for promoting equality and inclusion and tackling discrimination.

### **7.1. Governors**

Our governors are responsible for;

- Following the school policy by demonstrating this in their own behaviour.
- Ensuring that the school complies with all current equality legislation.
- Ensuring the policies and procedures are followed.

- Ensuring that the school has up to date policies as necessary.

## 7.2. Headteacher

Headteachers are responsible for;

- Ensuring that the policy is implemented throughout the school and that all staff, governors, pupils and parents are aware of it.
- Ensuring procedures are followed.
- Producing regular information for staff and governors about the policy and how it is working and providing training as necessary.
- Ensuring that all staff know their responsibilities in terms of equality and receive support in implementing them.
- Taking timely and appropriate action in the event of any form of discrimination or harassment.

## 7.3. All Staff (including voluntary staff)

All staff are responsible for;

- Proactively following the policy and any associated guidelines.
- Providing role models for pupils through their own actions.
- Dealing with discriminatory incidents and recognising and tackling other forms of bias and stereotyping.
- Promoting equality and good community relations and avoiding discrimination against anyone for reasons of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or socio-economic circumstances.
- Keeping up to date in relation to the equality duty in school and attending training or other learning opportunities provided.

## 7.4. All Pupils

All of our pupils are responsible for;

- Treating each other kindly and fairly, without prejudice, discrimination or harassment.
- Attending and engaging in their own learning and helping other pupils to learn.
- Telling staff about any discrimination related incidents that happen.

## 7.5. All Parents

All of our parents are responsible for;

- Supporting the school in its implementation of this policy.
- Following the Trust policy by demonstrating this in their own behaviour.
- Ensuring their children attend school and engage in learning.
- Telling staff about any discrimination related incidents that occur.

## 7.6. Visitors

All visitors to our school are responsible for;

- Being aware and following our equality policy.
- Following the school policy by demonstrating this in their own behaviour.

## 7.7. Responsibility for Overseeing Equality Practices

Responsibility for overseeing equality practices lies ultimately with the Trustees however this is supported by Headteachers of each school within the Trust and the Academy Head of Operations. Specific responsibilities include;

- Coordinating and monitoring work on equality issues.
- Dealing with and monitoring reports of discriminatory behaviour.
- Monitoring the progress and attainment of identified vulnerable groups of children.
- Monitoring attendance and inclusion.

## **8. Breaches of this Policy**

Any breaches of this policy will be dealt with as part of the normal complaints procedure as is the case with breaches of any school policy. Anyone wishing to make a complaint will be advised accordingly.

## **9. References to other Documents, Advice and Guidance**

In monitoring this policy, advice and guidance will be sought from Hartlepool Local Authority officers where appropriate as well as sourcing advice from external bodies including the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Department for Education and OfSTED.

## **10. Accessibility Plan 2015/16**

Ad Astra Academy Trust is committed to providing a fully accessible environment which values and includes all students, staff, parents and other stakeholders regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs. We are committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.

The Trust accessibility plan will cover the three main strands of the planning duty;

- To increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- To improve the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- To improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils

<b>Target</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>
To ensure that all Academy Trust school buildings are accessible to all pupils.	Conduct an audit of all premises to identify specific issues. Identify if any existing or prospective pupils have specific needs.	All Academy Trust buildings will be fully accessible for all pupils.	End of Spring term 2016	Academy Head of Operations
To improve access to the school grounds	Ensure that a winter gritting plan is in place. Check that all pathways are clear and safe. Investigate a suitable disabled parking provision for visitors.	Paths are accessible and safe. Improved access for users of the school.	Gritting plan implementation to be in place by Winter season 2015. Parking provision investigation – end of spring term 2016	Academy Head of Operations/ School site staff
To ensure venues and destinations for educational visits are suitable and accessible for all pupils	Staff to undertake research prior to the visit to ensure suitability including transport and other support services such as toilet facilities.	All educational visits are accessible for all pupils and allow them to take part fully in the visit.	Ongoing requirement.	All staff and the EVC
To ensure that all children can access the curriculum by embedding differentiated teaching strategies.	School leadership teams and SENDco to assess accessibility to the curriculum through school self-evaluation activities and data analysis and challenge teaching staff accordingly.	All SEN children will be able to access the curriculum effectively	To commence academic year 2015/16	Leadership teams
To increase awareness of the equality duty among all academy staff	To include equality information and responsibilities in the staff handbook.	Staff have an increased awareness of equality responsibilities	End of summer term 2015/16	Academy Head of Operations
To ensure that all disabled and SEN children can access learning materials in a format that ensures they can access the curriculum	School SENDco's to audit their SEN register to ensure all children can access curriculum materials	All pupils will have equal access to the curriculum	End of autumn term 2015	SENDco's