



Victoria Academies Trust Equalities Policy

Date of Approval: February 2022
Date of Review: February 2025 (or if legislation changes)

Signed:

J Josan

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Related Policies and Procedures | 3 |
| Mission and Values..... | 4 |
| Scope and principles..... | 6 |
| Definitions | 7 |
| Equality | 7 |
| Diversity | 7 |
| Direct Discrimination | 8 |
| Indirect Discrimination | 8 |
| Victimisation | 8 |
| Harassment..... | 8 |
| Communication of the equality and diversity commitments and policy..... | 8 |
| Policies and procedures..... | 8 |
| Disability discrimination | 8 |
| Responsibilities and accountabilities | 9 |
| Employees | 11 |
| Conditions of Service | 11 |
| Training, Promotion and Pay Progression | 11 |
| Discipline, Capability and Termination of Employment | 11 |
| Part-time Employees | 12 |
| Training and Guidance in relation to the Equality and Diversity Policy | 12 |
| Breaches of this Policy | 12 |
| Pupils | 12 |
| Access to education and curriculum..... | 12 |
| Access to other opportunities | 13 |
| Recognition of positive behaviour and behaviour sanctions | 13 |
| Training and Guidance | 13 |
| Breaches of this Policy | 13 |
| Review of this Policy..... | 14 |
| Appendix A: Victoria Academies Trust Public Sector Equality Duty: Equality Statement..... | 14 |
| Appendix B: Victoria Academies Trust Equality Objectives..... | 17 |

Related Policies and Procedures

- Equality Act 2010
- Teacher Standards
- Disciplinary Policy
- CPD Policy
- Whistleblowing Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Appraisal Policy
- Pay Policies
- Managing Sickness Absence Policy
- Safeguarding Child Protection Policy
- Dealing with Allegations Against a Member of Staff
- Complaints Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Code of Conduct
- SEND Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policies
- Gender Pay Gap Report

Mission, Vision and Values

Our mission

Our mission is our core business – our purpose and primary objective. It is quite simply:

“To make people become the best they can be”

Our people are our colleagues, our pupils, our governors and our school communities, we want to empower and enable them to be able to be the very best that they can.

Our vision

Our vision is the future we intend to create, it paints a picture of our goals and aspirations. Our vision should be the heartbeat running through our schools and communities. It should be understandable, relatable and authentic.

“Our people will be brilliant, courageous and kind. Ambition and innovation are at the heart of all that we do as we strive to become the best we can be”

Our strapline is *‘being the best we can be’* and has been taken up by schools as their own ‘motto’.

Our values

To help us fulfil our mission, we have a number of core values that drive all that we do. These serve as our guiding principles that help us navigate. We believe that our values stand the test of time and allow us to stay true to our purpose, driving decisions which we make.

Our 5 core values, along with how we believe people should behave to achieve them are:

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Loyalty by | Focusing on family |
| Tenacity by | Insisting on excellence |
| Kindness by | Doing good as you go |
| Courage by | Embracing innovation |
| Brilliance by | Seizing success |

'FIDES' helps us to ensure that the organisational behaviours across our family of schools are consistent and of the highest standard. We expect everyone in our trust to abide by these values, especially when making difficult decisions. It is the mantra which each school believes in and works to in its day to day business.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

Victoria Academies Trust welcomes its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and is committed to developing, maintaining and supporting a culture of equality and diversity across all aspects of the Trust's work. The Trust aims to create an environment in which all employees, pupils and stakeholders are recognised as being of equal value and are able to grow and develop through equality of opportunity.

The general duties are to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations.

The objectives of this policy are to establish, promote and provide accountability in relation to the Trust's commitment to:

- Develop an ethos which respects and values all people.
- Actively advance equality of opportunity.
- Prepare pupils for life in a diverse society.
- Create an environment in which diversity is valued and celebrated.
- Promote good relations amongst people within each school's community and the wider communities within which we work.
- Eliminate all forms of unfair indirect and direct discrimination, bullying, harassment, victimisation or other oppressive behaviour.
- Deliver equality and diversity through the Trust's policies, procedures, and practice.
- Make reasonable adjustments and do our utmost, within available resources, to remove barriers which limit or discourage access to Trust provision and activities.
- Take positive action to provide encouragement and support to individuals and groups whose progress has been limited by protected characteristics, stereotyping and cultural expectations.

- Ensure that recruitment and selection procedures and practices within the Trust are open and transparent and ensure that fair and equal selection criteria are applied.
- Monitor the implementation of equality and diversity within the Trust.

Scope and principles

The Equality Act 2010 provides a single legal framework designed to be more effective at tackling disadvantage and discrimination. It places legal responsibilities on the Trust and covers the following nine protected characteristics:

- **Age** - a person of a particular age or belonging to a particular age group.
- **Race** - a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
- **Disability** - a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **Sex** - a man or a woman.
- **Sexual Orientation** - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.
- **Gender Reassignment** – a person who has undergone the process of transitioning from one gender to another.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership** – regardless of between a man and a woman or a same-sex couple.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity** - being pregnant or expecting a baby and the period up to 26 weeks after giving birth, including breastfeeding.
- **Religion and Belief** - religious and philosophical beliefs, including lack of belief, which affect life choices or the way a person chooses to live.

Equality of opportunity and inclusivity are fundamental to the vision and values of the Trust. The commitment to equality and diversity is, in part, achieved through the eradication of discrimination and is implemented through appropriate policies, procedures and good practice which reflect the following key principles:

- Equality and social justice.
- Acknowledging and valuing diversity.
- Respect for others.

- Compliance with equality legislation.
- Elimination of all forms of prejudice and unfair discrimination.
- Active challenge to stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes.
- Commitment to inclusive education and a working environment which enables and supports all pupils and staff to flourish and meet their potential.
- Commitment to the positive development of all staff, governors, and Trustees.
- Accountability for compliance with this policy by all members of the Trust, academy communities and all those engaged in Trust or school activities.

All staff, pupils and stakeholders have a duty to act in accordance with both the content and spirit of this policy and treat one another with respect and dignity at all times. The Trust will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of any of the protected characteristics listed above and will treat all instances of such conduct extremely seriously. Conduct which does not comply with this policy may be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy (staff) or Behaviour Management Policy (pupils) as appropriate.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time following consultation with staff and recognised trade unions.

Victoria Academies Trust Public Sector Equality Duty Statement is attached as Appendix A.

Victoria Academies Trust Public Sector Equality Objectives are attached as Appendix B.

Definitions

Equality

The Equality and Human Rights Commission describes equality as *“ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability”*.

Diversity

Diversity can be described as having or being composed of differing elements. In the context of this policy, diversity exists in both visible and non-visible ways through our employees, pupils and stakeholders having physical, religious and cultural differences and varied life experiences and choices, views and perspectives. The Trust aims to foster an environment in which diversity is promoted and celebrated through inclusion, respect and appreciation of one another.

Direct Discrimination

Direct Discrimination is the term used in law to describe a situation in which an individual is treated less favourably than someone else has been treated (or would be treated) because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic under the Equality Act. Unless there is a statutory exception, direct discrimination cannot be excused or defended in law.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when action is taken which appears to treat everyone equally, but which in practice leads to people from a particular protected group under the Equality Act 2010 being treated less favourably than others. This may occur through the implementation of policies or procedures and will not be justified unless the action is needed to achieve a legitimate aim, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have asserted their legal rights in line with the Equality Act 2010 or supported another individual to do so.

Harassment

Harassment can be described as unwanted conduct related to one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 which has the purpose or effect of violating the individual's dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive environment.

Communication of the equality and diversity commitments and policy

The Trust will take active steps to communicate the existence and/or principles of the Equality Policy via appropriate means to all pupils, staff and stakeholders of the Trust.

Policies and procedures

All Trust policies and procedures will be designed to promote equal opportunity and protection against discrimination for all employees, pupils and stakeholders. The impact of any policy changes on equality issues will be considered prior to implementation. In some instances of substantial changes to policies or procedures, a formal equality impact assessment will be required.

Disability discrimination

The Trust supports the ethos of the social model of disability which attempts to remove barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people. The Trust encourages all employees, pupils (or their

parents/carers) or stakeholders to alert a relevant member of staff if they are disabled or become disabled in order that the Trust can support them as appropriate.

If employees, pupils or stakeholders experience difficulties at work or school because of their disability, they (or their parents/carers in the case of a pupil) should speak to their line manager or a senior member of staff to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. It may be necessary for the line manager or senior member of staff to consult with other senior staff, the HR Team, the individual (and their parents/carers in the case of a pupil) and their medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. In the case of an employee, the Trust may also seek advice and guidance from an occupational health advisor. The Trust will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate the individual’s needs. If the Trust consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, the reasons will be explained, and the Trust will try to find an alternative solution where possible.

The Trust will monitor the physical features of the organisation’s premises and buildings to consider whether they place disabled workers, pupils or stakeholders at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff, pupils or stakeholders. Where reasonable, the Trust will take steps to improve access for disabled individuals.

Responsibilities and accountabilities

It is important to remember that each individual is responsible for their acts, carried out both within and outside employment. Any person instructing, inducing or encouraging others by inaction or action to behave in a manner which is inconsistent with this policy will themselves be in breach of this policy and will be dealt with accordingly.

| School Community | Responsibility |
|---|---|
| Trust Board and Academy Councils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring they fulfil the legal responsibilities of the organisation in relation to equality. • Ensuring Trust wide and local policies adopted are designed to support equality and diversity. • Ensuring the schools within the Trust adhere to the equality and diversity policy and other associated policies and procedures. |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Executive Leaders, Head Teachers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing consistent and high-profile leadership in relation to equality and diversity. • Advancing equality and diversity inside and outside the Trust and academies by promoting a culture in which diversity is celebrated and in which discrimination and inequality are understood by all members of the community to be unacceptable. • Ensuring policies and procedures are in place to comply with all equality legislation. • Ensuring that the schools within the Trust implement the relevant equality and diversity policies and practices and that suitable training is provided by the Trust to senior staff to aid them to do so. |
| <p>Senior Leaders</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring they promote and monitor compliance with the relevant equality and diversity policies and procedures. This is achieved by setting an appropriate standard of behaviour, led by example and ensuring that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the Trust's aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. • Making sure that all staff know their responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity and receive the support and training necessary to carry them out. • Following the relevant procedures and taking action in cases of unfair discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation. |
| <p>All Employees</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting equality and diversity through their own actions and their work within the Trust and avoiding unfair discrimination. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring pupils' knowledge and experience of diverse religious and cultural ceremonies, practices and traditions is shared in a positive way where possible. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively responding to or reporting to management, as appropriate any incidents of unfair discrimination which relate to protected characteristics perpetrated by pupils, other employees or stakeholders. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping up to date with equality requirements and participating in equal opportunities and diversity training. |
| <p>Pupils</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaving in a way that is consistent with the expectations of the Trust's Equality and Diversity Policy and other associated policies such as the Behaviour Management Policy. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respecting others in their language and actions. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Stakeholders (including parents, regular visitors and volunteers) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaving in a way that is consistent with the expectations of the Trust’s Equality and Diversity Policy and other associated policies. • Respecting others in their language and actions and avoiding any discriminatory behaviour. |
|--|--|

Employees

Conditions of Service

The Trust will ensure that employee terms and conditions of service are determined and applied in a fair and consistent manner following staff and trade union consultation where applicable.

The Trust will also ensure that any facilities, benefits and practical support offered to employees, are developed, promoted and delivered in a manner which secures accessibility for all staff in a fair and consistent manner. Furthermore, the Trust will seek to identify and remove any access barriers where possible.

Training, Promotion and Pay Progression

The Trust will ensure provision for spiritual, moral, social, cultural and professional development takes account of the diverse staffing group employed by the Trust and is managed in a way which secures equal opportunities for all employees.

Employee training needs will be identified throughout the academic year and during the staff appraisal process. All employees will be given equal, fair and appropriate access to training and developmental opportunities to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

The Trust will ensure that pay progression processes and decisions are fair and equitable and avoid discrimination of those who have, or are thought to have, protected characteristics.

Discipline, Capability and Termination of Employment

The Trust will ensure that expectations in relation to employee conduct and capability are determined and measured in a consistent manner. Any disciplinary and capability procedures and associated sanctions will be applied on the facts of the case and without discrimination.

The Trust will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

Part-time Employees

The conditions of service in relation to part-time employees will be monitored to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, pay progression and promotion opportunities. The Trust will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately in accordance with the Trust's relevant policies and procedures.

Training and Guidance in relation to the Equality and Diversity Policy

Questions in relation to the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Head Teacher, CEO or member of the Executive Leadership team to request training or further information.

Employees will be given appropriate training in relation to equality and diversity awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice, as appropriate to role.

Breaches of this Policy

If an employee believes that they may have been treated in a way that is inconsistent with this policy, they are encouraged to raise the matter informally with the individual concerned or their line manager where possible. If this is not possible, or does not resolve the situation, they should raise the matter through the Trust's Grievance Policy or other relevant policy where applicable.

If an employee believes the treatment of a colleague, student or stakeholder by another member of staff constitutes a breach of this policy, they should raise this directly with the individual whose conduct is of concern, or with their line manager or through the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be taken seriously and will be investigated in accordance with the relevant policy and procedure. Employees who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or bullying or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal.

Pupils

Access to education and curriculum

The Trust is committed to operating admissions arrangements which reflect a fair and equitable process, ensuring admissions applications are assessed in accordance with each school's Admissions Arrangements Policy.

The Trust is also committed to delivering high quality academic, enriched education and curriculum for all its pupils. This is with the aim of enabling each pupil to fulfil their potential academically, socially, morally, spiritually and physically.

All pupils in the care of the Trust, regardless of any protected characteristics, ability or circumstance, are expected to become individual, independent learners and fulfil their potential through appropriate levels of attainment and achievement.

Access to other opportunities

Each school will ensure that access to wider opportunities will be made available to all pupils in a fair and equitable manner and one which is consistent with the principles of this policy.

Recognition of positive behaviour and behaviour sanctions

Each school will ensure that any recognition of positive behaviour is based on merit and determined and applied in a consistent manner in order that all pupils have opportunity to be rewarded, recognised and motivated as appropriate.

Each school will ensure that expectations in relation to pupil behaviour are determined and measured in a consistent manner. Any behaviour sanctions will be applied in accordance with the appropriate Behaviour Policy and on the facts of the situation and without discrimination.

Training and Guidance

Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities to deepen their knowledge about all aspects of their local, national and wider community. This is achieved in part through high quality assemblies, planned curricular opportunities and other relevant sessions.

Schools ensure that the personal, social, health and economic education (PHSE) and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) curriculums are underpinned by the celebration of equality and diversity.

Breaches of this Policy

Pupils and/or their parents or carers are encouraged to speak to a member of staff that they trust if they feel that they or anyone else is being treated in a way that is inconsistent with this policy. Regular assemblies and other activities in school promote the roles of the adults within school and aim to create an environment in which pupils feel able to be open about their concerns.

If a pupil's behaviour is not consistent with the Trust's expectations in relation to equality and diversity, then action will be taken in line with the relevant school's Behaviour Management Policy. Ensuring a fair investigation, and an educative approach should be the focus for dealing with any student who breaches the expectations.

Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board to ensure legal compliance and effectiveness every three years, save for circumstances in which an earlier review is necessary.

The Trust's Public Sector Equality Duty: Equality Statement will be reviewed and updated annually.

The Trust's Public Sector Equality Duty: Equality Objectives will be updated every four years and will be subject to interim review.

Appendix A: Victoria Academies Trust Public Sector Equality Duty:

Equality Statement

Victoria Academies Trust is committed to developing, maintaining and supporting a culture of equality and diversity across all aspects of the Trust's work. In order to achieve this, the Trust is collecting and using evidence on equality to develop our policy and decision making and to inform the Trust's Equality Objectives (Appendix B).

The Trust is committed to operating as an equal opportunities employer and recognises that a diverse workforce enables us to serve our pupils and communities more effectively. This commitment is embedded in our recruitment material, policies and practices. The Trust's Gender Pay Gap Report can be found on the Trust website.

The Trust is also committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all children in an environment in which they are nurtured and are recognised as being of equal value in order to help them fulfil their potential.

Equality Duty

This statement describes how the Board of Trustees of Victoria Academies Trust intends to fulfil its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty with regard to its workforce. The Equality Objectives will be part of the Trust's Development Plan and is applicable to all our academies.

We will have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it: and

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

We will collect and use equality information to help us to:

- Identify key issues
- Understand the impact of our policies, practices and decisions on people with different protected characteristics, and thereby plan them more effectively.
- Assess whether we are discriminating unlawfully when carrying out any of our functions.
- Identify what the key equality issues are for our organisation.
- Assess performance
- Benchmark our performance and processes against those of similar organisations, nationally or locally.

Take action

- Consider taking steps to meet the needs of staff who share relevant protected characteristics.
- Identify if there are any actions we can take to avoid discrimination and harassment, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.
- Make informed decisions about policies and practices which are based on the impact of our activities on equality.
- Develop objectives to meet the specific duties.
- Have due regard to the aims of the general equality duty by ensuring that staff have appropriate information for decision-making.

We will work towards developing an equality profile of staff to help us to understand key equality issues in our workforce, including any evidence of pay gaps or 'occupational segregation' ie. Staff with certain protected characteristics being over represented in particular roles, for example, women as cleaners, or at certain grades. In addition, we note that it is likely to be useful to collect and consider information, appropriately disaggregated, about:

- Recruitment and promotion
- Numbers of part-time and full-time staff
- Pay and remuneration
- Training
- Return to work of women on maternity leave
- Return to work of disabled employees following sick leave relating to their disability
- Appraisals
- Grievances (including about harassment)
- Disciplinary action (including for harassment)
- Dismissals and other reasons for leaving.

Publication of Equality Information

We will publish relevant, proportionate information which is broad enough to give a full picture of performance across our schools. We will demonstrate how we have used this information to have due regard to all three aims of the duty, for all relevant protected characteristics. Our information will usually fall into two main categories:

- Information to identify equality issues. Examples of this include monitoring information about employees, information about the effect of our activities on people with different protected characteristics or any engagement we may have carried out.
- Information about steps taken to have due regard to the aims of the general equality duty. For example, any records we have about how we had due regard in making certain decisions, information that was considered in that decision-making (including engagement), consideration of steps to mitigate adverse impacts, or details of policies to address equality concerns.

We note that the Equalities and Human Rights Commission would normally expect to see the following information:

- The race, disability, gender and age distribution of our workforce at different grades, and whether they are full or part time
- An indication of the likely representation on sexual orientation and religion and belief, provided that no-one can be identified as a result
- An indication of any issues for transsexual staff, based on engagement with transsexual staff or equality organisations
- Gender pay gap information
- Information about occupational segregation
- Grievance and dismissal information for people with relevant protected characteristics
- Complaints about discrimination and other prohibited conduct from staff
- Details and feedback of engagement with staff and trade unions
- Quantitative and qualitative research with employees e.g. staff surveys
- Records of how we have had due regard to the aims of the duty in decision-making with regard to our employment, including any assessments of impact on equality and any evidence used
- Details of policies and programmes that have been put into place to address equality concerns raised by staff and trade unions

Appendix B: Our Equality Objectives

| | Objective | Relevant Equality Duty |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Prepare pupils for life in a diverse society in which students are able to see their place in the local, regional and national and international community. | Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act |
| | | Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not |
| | | Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not |
| 2 | Improve our experiences available to our pupils to ensure opportunities and access for all. | Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act |
| | | Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not |
| 3 | Promote equality of opportunity across the workforce, ensuring equal access to training, development and promotion opportunities. | Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act |
| | | Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not |