

The Spire Church of England Learning Trust

Equality Policy

1. Mission statement

At the Spire Church of England Trust we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all students, staff, parents/carers, irrespective of race, gender, disability, religion and belief, 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 attainment and achievement of students will be monitored by race, gender and disability and we will use this data to support students, 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. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

2. Mainstreaming equality into policy and practice

As well as the specific actions set out beneath this plan, The Spire Church of England Trust operates equality of opportunity in its day to day practice in the following ways.

Teaching and learning

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

- Use data to improve the ways in which we provide support to individuals and groups of students;
- Monitor attainment and achievement data by ethnicity, gender and disability and action any gaps;
- Take account of the attainment and achievement of all students when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets;
- Ensure equality of access for all students and prepare them for life in a diverse society;
- Use materials that reflect the diversity of the college, 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 students to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures;
- Seek to involve all parents/carers 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 school population, which are inclusive and reflective of our students' background and needs.

Admissions and exclusions

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

Exclusions will always be based on the Behaviour Policy. We will closely monitor exclusions to avoid any potential adverse impact and ensure any discrepancies are identified and dealt with.

3. Equal opportunities for staff

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.

However we are concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of The Spire Church of England Trust reflects the diversity of our community.

Employer duties

As an employer we 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 particularly 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

There are a number of statutory duties that must be met by every school in line with legislation from the Disability Equality Duty (2005), Equality Act (2006) and the Equality Act (2010).

Public Sector Equality Duty

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate against a student or prospective student by treating them less favourably on the basis of a 'protected characteristic'. The protected characteristics are:

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

A person's age is also a protected characteristic in relation to employment, and in regard to the provision for goods and services. It does not however apply to students, and so The Spire Church of England Trust is free to arrange students in classes based on their age group with appropriate, age-related, materials.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty which applies to public bodies, school including both LA maintained and Academies. As such, we must have due regard to the need to:

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

Having due regard in this context means that when significant decisions are being taken, thought must be given to the equality implications. Appendix A shows how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

4a. Race Equality

The definition of race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

4b. Disability

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

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. People with HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer (although not all cancers) are deemed disabled before they experience the long-term and substantial adverse effect on their activities.

We recognise that some disability organisations recommend that all students with a statement of special educational need and those with long term medical needs be treated as disabled for the purposes of the Act and for equality. This is in addition to students with long-term impairments, which have a significant impact on their day-to-day activities. We do, therefore, consider carefully self or parent/carer definitions that seek to categorise students as 'disabled' under the Act.

We use the "social model" of disability, as advised by the Equality Commission for Human Rights.

Legal duties

The Equality Act 2010 places a general duty on schools, requiring them to have due regard 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, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

Involvement of disabled people

We will use information collected about the progress and inclusion of disabled students and seek their views and the views of significant adults about the effect of its activities on disabled people to help it to judge how well it is performing in meeting the needs of disabled people, particularly as part of wider impact assessments, and in identifying any further action required to improve disability equality.

Equality questionnaires are completed by our parent/carers via the data checking sheets issued each year. Staff are asked via the application process.

Developing a voice for disabled stakeholders

We follow good practice by enabling disabled students, parents/carers and staff to participate in public life by involving them in developing and monitoring this scheme and its action plan.

Governance

The Governors are committed to meeting their duties under disability equality legislation and aims to follow the good practice set out in the statutory code of practice and guidance which support the legislation.

4c. Gender Equality

The Gender Equality Duty 2006 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 students and between women and men and transgender people.

Under our general duty we will actively seek to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on grounds of sex and gender reassignment;
- Promote equality between men and women.

4d. Sexual Orientation

The Equality Act 2006 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 2007 came into force on 30 April 2007, and they 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 students and treatment of students.

4e. Community cohesion

Community cohesion encompasses promoting good relations between students from different races, faiths / beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds.

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, students and parents/carers. We have achieved this by using the following to shape the plan:

- Feedback from the annual parent/carer questionnaire, parents' evening and parent/carer forum meetings;
- Feedback from staff surveys or meetings;
- Feedback from the school council, tutor time, PSHE lessons and whole school surveys;
- Issues raised in annual reviews or reviews of progress on Individual Education Plans/personalised provision maps, mentoring and support;
- Feedback at governing body meetings.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The role of governors

- The governing body has set out its commitment to equal opportunities in this plan and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that the school is fully inclusive to students, and responsive to their needs based on the protected characteristics.
- The governing body seeks to ensure that people are not discriminated against when applying for jobs at our school on grounds of the protected characteristics.
- The governors take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school environment gives access to people with disabilities, and also strive to make school communications as inclusive as possible for parents/carers and students.
- The governors welcome all applications to join the school, whatever a child's socio-economic background, race, gender or disability.
- The governing body ensures that no child is discriminated against whilst in our school on account of their race, sex or disability, gender, religion and belief or the fact that they are pregnant or are undergoing gender reassignment.

The role of the headteacher

- It is the headteacher's role to implement the Equality Policy and he is supported by the governing body in doing so.
- It is the headteacher's role to ensure that all staff are aware of the Equality Policy, and that teachers apply these guidelines fairly in all situations.
- The headteacher 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 promotes the principle of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum, and promotes respect for other people and equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life.
- The headteacher treats all incidents of unfair treatment and any incidents of bullying or discrimination, including racist incidents, with due seriousness.

The role of all staff

- All staff will ensure that all students are treated fairly, equally and with respect, and will maintain awareness of the Equality Policy and objectives.

- 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 headteacher.
- Teachers support the work of ancillary or support staff and encourage them to intervene in a positive way against any discriminatory incidents.

7. Tackling discrimination

Harassment or victimisation on account of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation, gender reassignment or pregnancy is unacceptable and is not tolerated within the school environment.

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 student's individual circumstances.

Staff and governors should be aware of both direct and indirect discrimination and understand the differences.

Direct discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a 'provision, criterion or practice' is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage.

Racist and homophobic incidents and other incidents of harassment or bullying are dealt with by the member of staff present, escalating to the year team and on to the headteacher where necessary. All incidents are reported to the headteacher and racist incidents are reported to the governing body and local authority on a termly basis.

What is a discriminatory incident?

Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as "unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person"

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably, than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done ("a prohibited act") in connection with the Act. Eg. making an allegation of discrimination.

Types of discriminatory incident

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.

Responding to and reporting incidents

We will make it clear to 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 governing body expects all members of the school community to be committed to this policy, and that visitors will comply with it. It accepts responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented in every aspect of school life. If there is a breach of the policy, the school will take appropriate action. This may include the following.

In the case of students breaching the policy:

- staff dealing with the incident will complete an incident report form
- the perpetrator will be dealt with in accordance with the Behaviour Policy
- the consequences of any further breach of conduct will be clearly stated with the ultimate sanction of exclusion.

In the case of staff breaching the policy the relevant procedures outlined in the 'Staff discipline, conduct and grievance Policy' will be instigated.

In the case of parents/carers, visitors or contractors breaching the policy they will be reminded of the school's commitment to equality and asked to desist, and further incidents may lead to individuals being requested to leave school premises.

Serious breaches constitute criminal offences and will be reported to the relevant authorities.

8. Review of progress and impact

The governing body will receive regular reports from the headteacher that enable evaluation of the implementation and impact of actions taken to achieve the equality objectives. It will monitor the pattern and frequency of equality related incidents (defined as any incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person to contravene this policy and evaluate the effectiveness of response.

Appendix A

Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the act

We will:

- Develop and adapt its procedures on anti-bullying to include equality perspectives;
- Support staff to challenge and address any bullying and harassment that is based on a person's race, gender or ethnicity;
- Keep a record and report how these incidents are dealt with to the governing body and local authority on a termly basis;

Review our approach to race, gender and disability bullying and harassment whenever we review our policy on behaviour.

Monitoring impact

- We will collect and analyse evidence and data on students' attainment, achievement, attendance and participation by race, gender and disability, and use this to inform strategies to raise standards;
- The governing body will publish annually information to demonstrate how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- The governing body will publish termly one or more specific and measurable equality objectives.

Advance equality and opportunity between people who share a prohibited characteristic and people who do not share it.

We will ensure that:

- Student achievement is monitored by race, gender and disability and any trends or patterns in the data that may require additional action to narrow the gap are addressed;
- All staff are aware of the Equality Policy;
- The talents of disabled students are recognised and represented in Gifted and Talented programmes, and representation on the programmes fully reflects the school population in terms of race and gender;
- There is an inclusive approach to ensuring all students are given the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the life of the school;
- Disabled children can take part in all aspects of the curriculum, including educational visits and journeys, lunchtime activities, PE, dance and assemblies;
- Extended school activities such as breakfast and after-school clubs take into account student needs and access issues and students attending reflect the diversity of the school population in terms of race, gender, disability and socio-economic status;
- Feedback from staff, students, parents/carers will continue to be involved in the future development of the Equality Policy.

We will provide:

- Extra and additional support for students who are under-achieving, in order to make progress in their learning and their personal well-being;
- Additional support for parents/carers of under-achieving children;
- Additional support for disabled parents/carers and staff to help them to play a full part in the life of the school.

Foster good relationships across all characteristics, between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

We will:

- Promote positive images which reflect the diversity of the school and community in terms of race, gender and disability, for example in assemblies, books, publications and learning materials and in classroom/corridor display.

- Actively seek to recruit disabled people to the school and support them in their work and career development, and try to reflect the diversity of the school community in its workforce;
- Actively seek to recruit disabled people to the governing body and make reasonable adjustments to ensure that they can fully participate and contribute;
- Provide reasonable means for children, young people, their friends and families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relationships, including links with different schools and communities;
- Provide extended services, with opportunities for students, families and the wider community to take part in activities and receive services which build positive interaction and achievement for all groups;
- Support disabled students in the period of transition between middle and high school to ease the stress of moving and increase familiarity with new surroundings;
- Help children and young people to understand others and value diversity;
- Promote shared values, awareness of human rights and how to apply and defend them;
- Develop skills of participation and responsible action – for example through the new ‘Identity and Diversity: living together in the UK’ strand of citizenship education.

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