


Equality of Opportunity Policy

THE
C  **MPASS**
PARTNERSHIP OF SCHOOLS

Policy adopted:	Spring 2025
Other related Policies	Finance and Procedures Recruitment Anti Bullying Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Behaviour and Relationships
Next Review:	Spring 2028

Introduction

Legal context

The Equality Act 2010 drew together 116 pieces of legislation into one single Act. Its aim was to simplify the legal background relating to equality and extend provisions in some areas. The act provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

The Act includes a new integrated Equality Duty on all public bodies, effective from April 2011, that encompasses protection for the following nine personal characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

The duty requires public bodies to do the following in respect of all these characteristics:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relationships between people with differing personal characteristics.

The Compass Partnership Equality Policy aims to reflect and meet all legislative provisions to promote equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination, including the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Our equalities policy, aims alongside our Special Educational needs Policy to provide a platform for ongoing development, incorporating further adaptations in both law and best practice.

Implementation

Throughout our academies we take the nine protected characteristics into account at all levels from strategic to pupil. This policy will be monitored and delivered through individual academy improvement and self-evaluation and our Board of Trustees. We will report on progress annually, reviewing and revising the policy every three years.

Consultation

We aim to ensure we meet the needs of all members of our community. In order to achieve this we will involve all stakeholders in the development, implementation and review of our policy.

Values

Our young people, families, staff, Local School Committees (LSC's) and Trustees, are drawn from a rich variety of social backgrounds, family structures, ethnic groups and religions. We value each individual's right to respect, courtesy and the recognition of individual differences.

Promoting equality is central to our work. We strive to ensure that both adults and young people alike are given every opportunity to achieve, recognise their own worth and to play an important role in our community.

Our guiding principles are: -

- Young people are at the heart of all decisions made. Decisions are made with honesty and integrity
- Young people and staff are valued as individuals and encouraged to be confident and open-minded learners
- Everyone in our community is important and we create environments in our schools where everyone belongs.
- We actively oppose any form of prejudice or discrimination
- We provide high quality learning environments and an engaging curriculum that reflects the make up and interest of the individual academy community
- We work closely with staff, parents and carers to meet high standards of attendance, work and behaviour
- Our staff understand the importance of continual professional learning; they are knowledgeable, fair and adaptable.

We believe that diversity is a strength that drives innovation in our practice and pedagogy.

Race Equality and Community Cohesion

We are committed to:

- The promotion of good relationships and equality of opportunity between members of our community regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Eliminating unlawful racial discrimination
- Ensuring that this policy is embedded in individual academy development planning.
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The ethos across our partnership of schools is one in which everyone feels safe and valued, engendering a sense of belonging amongst every member of our community. Diversity is viewed as both enriching and essential to the success of our organisation.

Race discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin. All staff are committed to responding to any racist incidents in accordance with our clear guidelines and expectations, as set out in our behaviour and relationships policy

Community Cohesion

Demographics of communities across the UK has changed in recent decades and we now have rich and varied communities. One of the roles of education is to support learners to interact successfully with others from different backgrounds through their school years and beyond. This is achieved through learning to respect others' beliefs and attitudes, taking different perspectives into account, working in collaboration with others and demonstrating fairness and consideration of others.

The Compass Partnership of Schools is working towards being at the heart of the community and being an organisation that:

- Appreciates and values diversity
- Has strong, positive relationships
- Has communities that have a sense of belonging
- Offers opportunities to all

Disability Equality

A disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The effect on normal day-to-day activities involves one or more of the following:

- Physical mobility and/or coordination
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Speech, hearing or eyesight
- Ability to navigate social relationships
- Understanding of risk or danger
- Continence

The definition of disability includes a wide range of impairments including those which are often hidden such as dyslexia, autism, speech and language and attention deficit disorders. To note that whilst included in the definition, they only amount to a disability if they affect the individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities on a substantial and long-term basis.

Our schools will have due regard for the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between both disabled and non-disabled people
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and disability-related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disability
- Offer meaningful access to the curriculum and that adaptations are made to ensure the fullest participation in learning

We work closely with a range of outside agencies to ensure **we provide the best possible opportunities** for young people with additional needs. All of our young people are enabled to participate in both the curriculum and enrichment opportunities that are on offer at our individual academies.

We promote positive attitudes towards disability by promoting a deeper understanding of disability, actively challenging stereotypes, providing positive images and staff modelling respectful attitudes to disabled young people and adults.

We provide a confidential, supportive environment where staff, parents/carers and young people are able to disclose a disability in the knowledge that information will be **handled** with sensitivity and appropriately.

Whilst our primary aim is to make adaptations and adjustments to ensure participation, there may be circumstances in which educating a **child in a particular setting may not be in the best interests of them, or their peers in terms of achievement, safety and well-being.** In this eventuality we will then consult with both parents/carers and the Local Authority in a respectful and sensitive manner.

Gender Equality

We strive to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender (including gender re-assignment)
- Pro-actively promote equality of opportunity between the sexes

We are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all, irrespective of gender or sex. We recognise that definitions and choices may go beyond being male **or** female and include, for example intersex and self definitions. We actively challenge gender stereotypes and we encourage all young people to take a full and active part in all areas of each individual school's life.

- Young people are encouraged to think about roles, activities and occupations that are outside traditional gender stereotypes
- We actively challenge all gender bias
- All parents are encouraged to participate fully in their child's education

Religion and Belief

Through education we provide a positive environment, raising awareness of cultures and religion and actively promoting tolerance within our community.

Members of all faiths or belief, alongside those without religious belief, will be treated with equal dignity, respect and fairness.

UNICEF highlighted:

'Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage young people to respect their parents, and their own and others' cultures.' (Article 29) and 'Young people have a right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether these are shared by the majority of people in the country or not.' (Article 30).

The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is underpinned by this policy.

Sexual Orientation

We recognise the need to protect everyone from unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation. We are committed to taking a proactive approach to preventing all forms of homophobia within our schools.

We recognise the existence and damage of homophobia and transphobia in society. Homophobia and transphobia amongst adults is classified as a hate crime and incidents may be reported to the police. Homophobia in and amongst young people is much more likely to be about their lack of understanding. It is usually simply a learned response and not a considered view or opinion based on experience.

We will not tolerate homophobia and transphobia of any kind in our schools. We will not allow or support discrimination or prejudice or accept language or behaviour which is harmful or less than respectful to any individual person or group of people. We will always respond in a consistent, clear and positive way in dealing with any and all kinds of homo/transphobia or homo/transphobic abuse. We will enable young people and young adults to understand that there are a range of differences, options and choices in peoples' lifestyles and that all differences are valid, valued and recognised.

We help young people understand that being, for example, gay or lesbian is about more than sexual preference (just as ethnicity is about more than skin tone). Everyone expresses their gender in a unique and personal way. We help young people to understand that the words gay and lesbian are not terms of abuse or ridicule and they are not 'rude' or swearing. We will help young people to understand that this also applies to being bisexual, transgender or intersex.

Anti-bullying and Discriminatory Policy Framework

All forms of bullying and discrimination are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Our anti-bullying policy sets out how the Compass Partnership addresses bullying.

Employment Practices

Recruitment

Recruitment of staff within the Compass Partnership follows transparent and fair protocols, which are outlined in our Recruitment Policy

Advertising of vacancies

As a minimum, all vacancies will normally be advertised across the Trust, through advertising on My Compass and on noticeboards, where available. This will help maximise equality of opportunity and provide staff with opportunities for career development, thus maintaining the skills and expertise of existing staff.

In extenuating circumstances, the CEO/Executive Team/Head teacher may waive the need to advertise. This is likely to include the following circumstances:

- Where positions may provide suitable alternative employment for existing staff whose post has been identified for redundancy, including the termination of fixed term contracts or following a restructuring exercise
- Positions requiring specialised expertise where the Head teacher can demonstrate that a comprehensive search has been conducted and the nominated individual is the most suitable person for the position.

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Selection for appointment or promotion

All decisions relating to appointments or promotions will be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- A detailed job description and person specification will be drawn up which accurately describes the duties of the post
- From these documents a list of objectively assessed selection criteria will be drawn up
- Job descriptions, person specifications and selection criteria will be available to all candidates
- Shortlisting will be carried out against the selection criteria

- In accordance with the statutory requirement, every interview panel will have at least one member who has undertaken Safer Recruitment Training in the last 3 years. In addition, at least one member will have undertaken general recruitment or equalities training. All interview panel members will act in accordance with the requirements of anti-discrimination legislation
- Selection decisions will be made against the agreed criteria and no other criteria will be used
- Reasonable adjustments will be made to the recruitment and selection process where necessary to ensure that people with disabilities are enabled to compete for appointments in the schools

Specific Issues

The Trustees of the Compass Partnership are opposed to any discrimination based on the following (and forms of discrimination that may not have been identified explicitly here):

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marital status or civil partnership
- Pregnancy, maternity/paternity
- Race, colour, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief,
- Sexual orientation

Where a candidate who has a disability is appointed to a post in the school, reasonable provision will be made for adjustments to the working conditions or environment where this is practicable.

Positive Action

The Trustees of the Compass Partnership recognise that the avoidance of discrimination is not sufficient to ensure that equality exists in the schools. Full consideration to measures of positive action, designed to encourage or facilitate the employment or training of minority or disadvantaged groups will be given. We will not discriminate in favour of individuals from specific groups (positive discrimination), but will take positive action which enables members of those groups to compete on an equal basis.

Positive action may include:

- Encouraging people with disabilities to apply for posts
- Advertisements which encourage applications from individuals of a particular protected group, but make it clear that selection will be on merit

- Flexible working – promoting the use of job shares and flexible working where operational factors make this possible
- Supporting training measures for under-represented protected groups
- Assistance with applications for candidates with language difficulties
- Developing provision that actively engages under represented groups in key subject areas such as girls football or science club

Procurements and contracting

We define this as the way we obtain and/or purchase goods and services.

Business interests

In accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook and academy funding agreements, all Senior Leaders, Members, Trustees and Local School Committee members are required to declare their business interests and any relevant material interests arising from close family relationships between the Trust's members, trustees or local governors. The Trust must also identify relevant material interests arising from close family relationships between those individuals and employees. These interests will be recorded in a register which must be kept under regular review and published on the Trust website. The accuracy of the information will be confirmed at least annually.

We will ensure efficient and effective procurement in the provision of appropriate resources across the Trust. We have a Financial Procedures policy and follow central audit requirements and the standards of FMSIS to ensure that efficient and effective procurement of goods and services is undertaken with regard to sound principles, the values of economy of effort, and achieving best value.

All staff involved in procurement follow the arrangements outlined in our Financial Procedures policy in respect of procurement processes, authorisation of orders and payments. At all times we seek to streamline processes, achieve savings, secure quality goods and services and where possible and appropriate, allow choice.

Cross Partnership Working

As an established trust we are committed to gaining the benefits of partnership working. We know the benefits of peer support and how powerful it can be in school improvement. Whilst we are committed to cross school working, we are aware of how others may perceive the make up of groups and or committees.

For fairness and transparency we will ensure that working parties and committees are made up of a representative group from across our schools. Where possible all

learning walks and reviews will be undertaken by groups that are representative of our Trust.

Consultation and Information

We want all school users to be supportive of and involved in the implementation of this policy. We will achieve this through consultation to determine the priorities for the schools with regards to equality over the next three years. Our consultation will include methods such as, questionnaires, feedback slips, feedback from parents/carers' meetings, both informal and formal discussions and listening to pupil opinion.

Equalities Analysis Assessments

We review key policies, functions and procedures that have been assessed as relevant to meeting the duties set out under race, gender, disability and religion or belief legislation. In line with best practice we also assess the impact of our key policies, functions and procedures on promoting sexual orientation equality. We look for opportunities to promote equality that have previously been missed or could be better used, as well as negative or adverse impacts that must be removed or mitigated.

Equalities Action Plan

Our action plan shows explicit objectives for all relevant equality issues:

- Clear allocation of lead responsibility and resources
- Clear timescales
- Publish policy and Action Plan, which is updated every 3 years
- Monitoring annually by LSC for impact on all stakeholders.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Board of Trustees will assess the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout all Trust schools. This Policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees on a 3-yearly cycle. Adherence to the policy will be monitored by the Local School Committee.