

Equalities Policy



September 2025
To be reviewed 2027 or as required

Introduction

Orchard, Southwold and Hoxton Garden are inclusive schools where we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and where all members of our community are of equal worth.

We believe that the Equality Act provides 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 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998. When developing the policy account has been taken of the DfE guidance on the Equality Act 2010.

Our approach to equality is based on the following 7 key principles

All learners are of equal value. Whether or not they are disabled, whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background and whatever their sexual orientation.

We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength. We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face, in relation to disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, belief or faith and sexual orientation. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

We foster positive attitudes and relationships. We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.

We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of our school community to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community and to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully in school life.

We observe good equalities practice for our staff. We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development

We have the highest expectations of all our children. We expect that all pupils can make good progress and achieve to their highest potential

We work to raise standards for all pupils, but especially for the most vulnerable. We believe that improving the quality of education for the most vulnerable groups of pupils raises standards across the whole school.

Purpose of the policy

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). This means that schools cannot discriminate against pupils or treat them less favourably because of their sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy or maternity. Age and marriage and civil partnership are also “protected characteristics” but are not part of the school provisions related to pupils.

The Act requires all public organisations, including schools to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and two specific duties.

The Public Sector Equality Duty or “general duty”

This requires all public organisations, including schools to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

Two “specific duties”

This requires all public organisations, including schools to:

- Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty by April 6th 2012
- Publish Equality objectives at least every 4 years which are specific and measurable by April 6th 2012

This policy describes how the school is meeting these statutory duties and is in line with national guidance. It includes information about how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and also provides guidance to staff and outside visitors about our approach to promoting equality.

What we are doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation:

- We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions and exclusions; the way we provide education for our pupils and the way we provide access for pupils to facilities and services.
- We are aware of the ‘Reasonable Adjustment’ duty for disabled pupils – designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled pupils and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.
- The Headteacher ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities.
- We take seriously the need to consider the equality implications when we develop, adapt and review any policy or procedure and whenever we make significant decisions about the day today life of the school. We make a record of each specific equality consideration and this is available for review if required.
- We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and by creating an environment which champions respect for all.
- Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not discriminate against pupils by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

Behaviour, Exclusions and Attendance

The school Policy on Behaviour - Rewards, Sanctions and Exclusions - takes full account of the new duties under the Equality Act. We make reasonable, appropriate and flexible adjustment for pupils with a disability. We closely monitor data on exclusions and absence from school for evidence of over-representation of different groups and take action promptly to address concerns.

Addressing prejudice and prejudice based bullying

The school challenges all forms of prejudice and prejudice-based bullying, which stand in the way of fulfilling our commitment to inclusion and equality:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- prejudices around race, religion or beliefs
- prejudices around gender and sexual orientation

There is guidance in the staff handbook on how prejudice-related incidents should be identified, assessed, recorded and dealt with. We treat all bullying incidents equally seriously.

What we are doing to advance equality of opportunity between different groups:

- We know the needs of our school population very well and collect and analyse data including that of different groups as well as of attendance and achievement in order to inform our planning and identify targets to achieve improvements.
- We have procedures, working in partnership with parents and carers, to identify children who have a disability through our pupil admissions meetings.
- We publish an analysis of standards reached by different groups at the end of each key stage:
- We are aware that the legislation relates mainly to current but also to future pupils – we will for example, be sufficiently prepared if a Visually Impaired, Hearing impaired or Gypsy Roma Traveller pupil joins our school.
- We avoid language that runs the risk of placing a ceiling on any pupils' achievement or that seeks to define their potential as learners.

We use a range of teaching strategies that ensures we meet the needs of all pupils:

- We provide support to pupils at risk of underachieving
- We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality.
- We ensure equality of access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.
- We prepare our pupils for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils.
- We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination through PSHE and citizenship and across the curriculum.
- We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability, avoiding stereotyping.
- We promote a whole school ethos and values that challenge prejudice based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour.

- We include the contribution of different cultures to world history and that promote positive images of people .
- We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, visitors, whole school events e.g. Black History Month.

In order to ensure that the work we are doing on equalities meets the needs of the whole school community we:

- Review relevant feedback from the annual parent questionnaire, parents' evening, parent-school forum and/or focus meetings.
- Secure and analyse responses from staff surveys, staff meetings and training events.
- Review feedback and responses from the children and groups of children, from the school council, PSHE lessons, whole school surveys on children's attitudes to self and school.
- Analyse issues raised in Annual Reviews or reviews of progress on Individual Education Plans/Personalised Provision Maps, mentoring and support.
- Ensure that we secure responses and feedback at Governing Body meetings and from the governing body's working groups.

Roles and Responsibilities

We expect all members of the school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this.

Governing body

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented.

Each governing body committee keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment. Governors annually review the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the school's Equalities Work taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g. data) and qualitative evidence (e.g. surveys).

Headteacher and Leadership Team

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

Teaching and Support Staff

All teaching and support staff will:

- Promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom.
- Challenge prejudice and discrimination.
- Deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur.
- Plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the school's principles, for example, in providing materials that give positive images in terms of race, gender and disability.
- Maintain the highest expectations of success for all pupils.
- Support different groups of pupils in their class through differentiated planning and teaching, especially those who may (sometimes temporarily) find aspects of academic learning difficult.
- Keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

Visitors

All visitors to the school, including parents and carers are expected to support our commitment to equalities and comply with the duties set out in this policy. We will provide guidance and information in school newsletters to enable them to do this.

Key contacts

Staff responsible for equalities: Executive Headteacher and Headteachers in each school.

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.
- We are also concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.
- As an employer we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce.
- We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.
- We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Links to other policies and documentation

- Although this policy is the key document for information about our approach to equalities, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, we ensure that information about our responsibilities under the Equality Act are also included in our school development plan, self evaluation review, school web site and newsletters.
- There are also references in the behaviour, admissions, SEN and anti-bullying policies as well as minutes of meetings involving governors, the whole staff, the senior leadership team and school council.
- *The Equality Act also applies to schools in their role as employers, and the ways we comply with this are found in our recruitment structures.*

Appendix 1

Guidelines for writing the equalities objective (published in The Key 2019)

What issues and challenges can equality objectives address?

Equality objectives may relate to any of the three aims of the public sector equality duty. They may be linked to challenges already identified in the school improvement plan, might respond to gaps identified through data analysis, or may result from consultation with pupils, staff and parents. Possible challenges include:

- Narrowing gaps in attainment between groups of pupils, for example, girls and boys
- Improving the attendance of pupils from particular groups
- Increasing the participation of particular groups in school activities
- Reducing prejudice-related bullying and the use of derogatory language
- Improving knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable pupils to appreciate and value difference and diversity, e.g. increasing understanding between pupils from different faith communities
- Improving the participation and engagement of different groups of parents and communities

Tips for developing equality objectives The following actions will help you set priorities, and ensure your objectives are focused on outcomes.

- Interrogate data and other evidence on performance, participation and pupils' experiences. Consider data about disadvantages for groups with particular protected characteristics (such as race, gender, disability and sexual orientation). What does this indicate?
- Consult with pupils, staff and parents. What issues and concerns are being raised?
- Develop a longer list of possible issues that might be addressed through setting equality objectives. The list can be shortened when issues have been discussed and prioritised
- Think about which objectives are most likely to deliver successful outcomes
- Consider how possible objectives can be integrated with school improvement and development plans
- Involve governors in deciding your priorities
- Consider whether proposed objectives are realistic, given possible constraints on resources
- Identify whether your objectives are focused on outcomes rather than processes, systems and procedures Making equality objectives specific and measurable It is a statutory requirement that equality objectives are 'specific and measurable'. This is to make sure that objectives are not vague or flimsy statements, but reflect achievable improvements that the school intends to make. Objectives should be clearly focused and demonstrate measurable outcomes. You should include a timeframe to help you measure success or progress towards achieving an objective.

Equality objectives should be clearly relevant to the groups with protected characteristics named in the Equality Act (gender, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation), but may refer also to groups disadvantaged by social and economic factors.

How many equality objectives should be set?

The minimum is one. The approach should be proportionate to school size. However, given the wide range of equality issues, most schools are likely to publish more than one objective.

How should equality objectives be published?

So long as the equality objectives are accessible to parents and members of the local community, you can choose their format. It might also be useful to publish further detail on each objective, for example:

- Reasons why the objective has been chosen, including any consultation and engagement undertaken
- A short description of what is going to be done to achieve each objective

How is progress recorded?

Schools should keep their equality objectives under review. Developing an action plan can help you map actions needed to meet the objective. However, you are not obliged to publish an action plan. It is also good practice to publish information on the progress that is being made towards meeting the equality objectives you have set. School governors have an important role in checking with school leaders how objectives are being met, as well as considering whether further objectives are necessary.

Appendix 2

Statement for school websites:

Our schools are inclusive; we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and we are committed to ensuring all members of our community are of equal worth. We believe that the Equality Act provides 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 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998. The Public Sector Equality Duty or “general duty”. This requires all public organisations, including schools to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups.
- Foster good relations between different groups.

We expect all members of the school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this.

What are we doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

- We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions and exclusions; the way we provide education for our pupils and the way we provide access for pupils to facilities and services.
- We are aware of the Reasonable Adjustment duty for disabled pupils – designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled pupils and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.
- The Headteacher ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities.
- We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and by creating an environment which champions respect for all.
- Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not discriminate against pupils by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.
- We challenge all forms of prejudice and prejudice based bullying.

What are we doing to advance equality of opportunity between different groups?

- We know the needs of our school population very well and collect and analyse data in order to inform our planning and identify targets to achieve improvements. We take action to close any gaps, for example, for those making slow progress in acquiring age-appropriate literacy and number skills. We also ensure children from all groups are challenged to reach higher levels.
- We have procedures, working in partnership with parents and carers, to identify children who have a disability through our pupil admissions meetings and home visits
- We also collect, analyse and use data in relation to attendance and exclusions of different groups.
- We use a range of teaching strategies that ensures we meet the needs of all pupils.
- We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality.
- We ensure equality of access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.
- We also implement an Accessibility Plan

What are we doing to foster good relations?

- We prepare our pupils for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils.
- We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination through PSHE and citizenship and across the curriculum.
- We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability, avoiding stereotyping. We include the contribution of different cultures to world history and that promote positive images of people.
- We promote a whole school ethos and values that challenge prejudice based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour.
- We provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures.
- We provide opportunities for pupils to listen to a range of opinions and empathise with different experiences
- We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, visitors, whole school events e.g. Black History Month.