



Equality and Diversity Policy 2024

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). All Members of the Board of Trustees of the exempt charity are also Directors of the company; the term 'Trustee' used in this document also means Director. This document applies to the Link Trust Trust and its individual academies.

1. Policy statement and principles:

- To treat all individuals with equal value.
- To eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- To foster positive attitudes and good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (i.e. tackle prejudice and promote understanding).
- To take such steps as are reasonable to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- To take such steps as are reasonable to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- To provide a range of education and training programmes which encourage everyone to participate in learning.
- To ensure that recruitment, retention and development of staff is done so following the equality principles.
- To consider equality implications before and at the time that policies are developed as well as keeping them under review on a continual basis.
- To carry out equality impact assessments to assess whether policies and / or plans are having a negative or adverse, or positive impact on specific groups of individuals.
- To ensure that all marketing activities and procurement processes meet equality and diversity best practice.
- To respect the religious beliefs and practices of all individuals.

1.1. In both its delivery of services and the employment of its staff, the Trust will ensure that no person will be discriminated against due to any of the protected characteristics as detailed in the Act. This includes discrimination due to association or perception (where it is believed that an individual has a particular characteristic). The characteristics protected by the act are:

- age (as an employer – but not applicable to students)
- disability
- ethnicity
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

1.2 In addition to this no employees will be discriminated against due to trade union membership or activities.

1.3 The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a Trust to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- In relation to admissions.
- In the way it provides education for pupils.
- In the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service.
- By excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

2 Roles and responsibilities

2.1 The Trust will:

- Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities, given necessary training and support, and report progress to the governing board.
- Ensure that the recording and reporting of equality and diversity is sufficiently scrutinised.
- Foster positive attitudes and relationships, a shared sense of cohesion and belonging, and ensure this is promoted in our policies, procedures and activities.
- Observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development, and ensure that all policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees regardless of any protected characteristic, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity.
- Reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist.
- Ensure staff promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in the Trust, challenging inappropriate language and behaviour, responding appropriately to incidents of discrimination and harassment, and showing appropriate support for pupils with additional needs, maintaining a good level of awareness of issues surrounding equality.

2.2 The Trustee board will:

- Ensure that the academies comply with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations.
- Effectively communicate and adopt this policy throughout the Trust
- Meet its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to publish equality objectives at least every four years commencing on the date of the last publication.
- Ensure that the Trust's policies and procedures are developed and implemented with appropriate equality impact assessments informing future plans.
- Ensure that the Trust's Admissions Policy does not discriminate in any way.
- Ensure equal opportunities in its staff recruitment and promotion practices, professional development programmes and in membership of the Trustee board.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the equality policy annually.
- Monitor education outcomes, incidents of harassment and discrimination and referrals by a range of criteria including protected characteristics.

2.3 The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will:

- Implement this policy and its procedures.
- Ensure that all staff members receive the appropriate equality and diversity training as part of their induction and CPD.
- Ensure that all parents, visitors and contractors are aware of, and comply with, the provisions of this policy.
- Actively challenge and take appropriate action in any case of discriminatory practice.
- Address any reported incidents of harassment or bullying in line with DfE guidance.

- Produce an annual report on the progress meeting the equality objectives set out in this policy.

2.4 Employees will:

- Be mindful of any incidents of harassment or bullying in the Trust.
- Address any minor issues of harassment or bullying and report any major breaches of the policy to the CEO
- Identify and challenge bias and stereotyping within the curriculum and the Trust's culture.
- Promote equality and good relations, and not harass or discriminate in any way.
- Monitor pupils' progress and academic needs to ensure the appropriate support is in place.
- Keep up to date with equality legislation and its application by attending the appropriate training.

3 Equality objectives

3.1 The Trust is committed to promoting the welfare and equality of all its staff, pupils and other members of the Trust community. To achieve this, the Trust has set the following Equality Objectives for the four-year period from May 2024 to April 2028:

- 3.1.1 To deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, which provides opportunities for all pupils to achieve the highest standards of education, using specialist programmes and dedicated resources (e.g. Pupil Premium and Sports Premium funding) to support pupils who need it the most.
- 3.1.2 To deliver a programme of assemblies, educational trips and to use outside visitors to promote the ethos of equality to pupils and help pupils develop good relationships with people of different characteristics.
- 3.1.3 To review pupil related policies and procedures (particularly, but not limited to, the pupil behaviour policy, the provision for SEND children and the academies accessibility plans) to ensure they facilitate full access to the curriculum and the Trust premises and facilities whenever possible.
- 3.1.4 To review its staff-related policies and procedures to ensure they comply with the Act (e.g. recruitment, flexible working, maternity and pay policies) and the Trust offers equal opportunities to all staff.

4. Promoting equality

4.1 In order to meet our objectives, the Trust has identified the following priorities:

- Staff will ensure that all pupils can take part in extracurricular activities and residential visits, and the Trust will monitor the uptake of these visits to ensure no one is disadvantaged on the grounds of a protected characteristic.
- The Trust will ensure that all forms of prejudice-motivated bullying are taken seriously and dealt with equally and firmly.
- There will be differential schemes of work designed to meet the abilities and learning styles of all pupils.
- There will be a clearly defined disciplinary system stipulated in the Behaviour Policy, which will be consistently enforced.
- The Trust will provide access for disabled children and young people to the Trust curriculum and will take necessary steps to meet pupils' needs by using a variety of approaches and planning reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, enabling them to take as full a part as possible in the activities of the Trust.
- The Trust will ensure there is adequate access to the physical environment of the Trust.
- The Trust will improve the delivery of written information to disabled children and young people.
- The Trust will seek the views of advisory staff, outside agencies and local academies.
- Throughout the year, the Trust will plan ongoing events to raise awareness of equality and diversity.

4.2 The Trust will consult with stakeholders to establish equality objectives and draw up a plan based

on information collected on protected groups and accessibility planning.

- 4.3 Equality objectives will be published at least every four years commencing on the date of the last publication.
- 4.4 All forms of prejudice-motivated bullying are taken seriously and dealt with equally and firmly. The Trust has an Anti-Bullying Policy and a Behaviour Policy to cover the areas that are not within the scope of the Equality Act.
- 4.5 Regular training will be given to both existing and new staff to ensure that they are aware of the process for reporting and following up incidents of prejudice-related bullying.

5. Addressing prejudice-related incidents

- 5.1 The Trust is opposed to all forms of prejudice, and we recognise that pupils and staff who experience any form of prejudice-related discrimination may fare less well in the education system.
- 5.2 The Trust will ensure that pupils and staff are aware of the impact of prejudice in order to prevent any incidents from occurring.
- 5.3 If incidents continue to occur, the Trust will address them immediately and report them through the appropriate procedure.

6. Curriculum

- 6.1 All pupils will be entitled to access a broad and balanced curriculum and to teaching and learning opportunities which meet their needs, including extra support where this has been identified as a statutory need.
- 6.2 When planning the curriculum, the Trust will take every opportunity to promote and advance equality.
- 6.3 When teaching the curriculum, the Trust will promote equality and will not subject individuals to discrimination.
- 6.4 The Trust will develop an appropriate curriculum for all pupils in all vulnerable groups.
- 6.5 The Trust will ensure PSHE lessons are designed for pupils to develop their knowledge of the world and the importance of equality.

7. Employment Provisions

- 7.1 The Trust is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all and ensuring that all stages of recruitment and selection are fair. Recruitment and selection procedures will be reviewed regularly.
- 7.2 Where a candidate is known personally to a member of the selection panel it will be declared before shortlisting takes place. It may then be necessary to change the selection panel to ensure that there is no conflict of interest and that equal opportunities principles are adhered to.
- 7.3 As an employer, the Trust strives to ensure that discrimination and harassment is eliminated in our employment practice, and we actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce.
- 7.4 The Trust will not discriminate against a potential employee in respect of whether to offer a job or the terms on which a job is offered. Regarding existing employees, the Trust will not discriminate against an individual regarding the benefits, facilities and services it offers including training opportunities, promotion or dismissal (including discipline and suspension). All staff appointments and promotions are done based on merit, ability and compliance with the law.
- 7.5 The Trust is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments in relation to disability for employees or potential employees and will ensure that staff with disabilities have access to appropriate support in the form of aids, adaptations and other specialist services and will make reasonable adjustments to arrangements or practices to alleviate disadvantage.
- 7.6 More information about our procedures relating to staff can be found in the following policies:
 - Recruitment Policy
 - Appraisal Policy
 - Discipline, Conduct and Grievance Policy
- 7.7 Enquiries about health and disability
 - 7.7.1 The Trust will not enquire about the health of an applicant for a job until a job offer has been

made, unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work for the position that has been applied for.

7.7.2 In some instances, the Trust may decide to ask necessary health questions after a job offer has been made to an individual. In such a situation the Trust will ensure that health-related questions are targeted, necessary and relevant to the job applied for.

7.8 Training

7.8.1 All staff will receive equal opportunities training which will include disability awareness / equality. This training will be part of staff induction as well as the CPD programme. All staff will receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

7.8.2 The Trust will ensure that no member of staff is denied access to any form of training because of an inaccessible venue or because the provision does not account for their disability. Staff with disabilities will be actively encouraged to attend courses which will support their career progression and personal development.

7.9 Staff discipline and suspension

7.9.1 The Trust is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated fairly and consistently and held to account through our staff appraisal discipline, conduct, and grievance policies.

7.9.2 Staff performance will be monitored, and we expect that staff will feel able to voice complaints and grievances in confidence, trusting that the Trust will deal with their grievances fully, promptly, and fairly.

8. Collecting and using information

8.1 The Trust will collect equality information for the purpose of:

- Identifying key issues, e.g. unlawful discrimination in teaching methods.
- Assessing performance, e.g. benchmarking against similar organisations locally or nationally.
- Taking action, e.g. adapting working practice to accommodate the needs of staff who share protected characteristics.

8.2 The Trust will build an equal profile for staff to help identify any issues within their recruitment process. The Trust will obtain the following information from their staff:

- 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 disabilities
- Appraisals
- Grievances (including about harassment)
- Disciplinary action (including for harassment)
- Dismissals and other reasons for leaving

This Policy is reviewed by the Standards & Curriculum Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees on an annual cycle.

Reviewed and approved by S&C Committee: 21st June 2023

Reviewed by Standards & Curriculum Committee: 9th July 2024

Approved by The Board of Trustees: 22nd July 2024