EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

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Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

INTRODUCTION

Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust (OHC&AT) is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our pupils, students and apprentices. OHC&AT is a 'family' of providers, comprising Orchard Hill College (OHC) and Orchard Hill College Academy Trust (OHCAT), which works for mutual benefit. OHC&AT is proud of its diverse community of pupils/students, apprentices, staff and stakeholders and is committed to maintaining excellence in teaching and learning by ensuring there is equality of opportunity for all, fostered in an environment of mutual respect and dignity.

As used within this policy, equality means ensuring everyone is able to participate in all our activities. Diversity acknowledges there are differences between people, which should be recognised, respected and celebrated. Inclusion means everyone feels enabled to participate fully in the life of the OHC&AT community and valued for the contributions that they make.

OHC&AT celebrates our organisational diversity. We embed a culture where all can contribute and be themselves.

As a public body we strive to be an exemplar to others. We value and welcome the different ideas, skills, behaviours and experiences of all. We aim to foster a culture that promotes wellbeing and mental health and provides support to enable everyone within our community to thrive.

As an employer and provider of education we are committed to meeting our legal obligations and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in both our work and our workforce.

We recognise that we need staff from diverse backgrounds to help ensure we make sound decisions that are representative of different perspectives within society. We seek to positively influence the approach of the staff and pupils/students/apprentices we work with to promote diversity and inclusion. We believe that a diverse workforce can help us to do that much more effectively.

The Law

- The Employment Rights Act 2025: Introduces significant new protections and obligations for employers, including stronger duties to prevent harassment, new requirements to develop and publish Equality Action Plans, expanded whistleblowing protections, and restrictions on the use of confidentiality clauses relating to discrimination and harassment.
- The Equality Act 2010: This replaced nine major Acts of Parliament and almost a hundred sets of regulations which had been introduced over several decades.

It provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful.

- The Human Rights Act 1998: This law incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. It protects a number of human rights, including the right to non-discrimination.

We strive to do more than just meet our statutory obligations. We promote equal opportunities and we respect and acknowledge the diversity of those who work within our organisation, our pupils/students/apprentices and other stakeholders.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty') that applies to public bodies, and extends to certain protected characteristics:

- race
- sex
- sexual orientation
- disability (or because of something connected with someone's disability)
- religion or belief
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy or maternity
- being married or in a civil partnership (this applies only at work or if someone is being trained for work)
- age (this applies only at work or if someone is being trained for work)

This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011.

Discrimination

Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional and may occur directly, indirectly, by association; it is not always obvious, and can be subtle and unconscious. This stems from a person's general assumptions about the abilities, interests and characteristics of a particular group that influences how they treat them. Discrimination can be consciously or unconsciously enacted.

The **general equality duty** sets out the equality matters that OHC&AT needs to consider when making decisions that affect pupils/students/apprentices or staff with different protected characteristics. This duty has three elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have 'due regard', when making decisions and developing policies, to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
3. Foster good relations across all protected characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity is defined further in the Equality Act 2010 as having due regard to the need to:

1. Remove or minimise disadvantages
2. Take steps to meet different needs
3. Encourage participation when it is disproportionately low.

To help educational establishments in England meet the general equality duty, there are **two specific duties** that they are required to carry out. These are:

1. To publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the equality duty, at least annually;
2. To prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives, at least every four years.

Equality objectives for each OHC&AT provision can be found on the relevant website.

In addition, schools have duties around accessibility for disabled pupils and must carry out accessibility planning for disabled pupils. These are the same duties as previously existed under the DDA and have been replicated in the Equality Act 2010. Schools must implement accessibility plans which are aimed at:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

Schools will need to have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and must regularly review them. OHC&AT will publish its accessibility plans on relevant websites and review and update them at least every three years.

From April 2018 organisations with more than 250 employees are required to report on gender pay gap data. OHC&AT will develop, publish and regularly review Equality Action Plans that set out clear, measurable actions to address inequality and monitor progress, in accordance with statutory requirements.

PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY ACROSS OHC&AT

Our commitment:

- We will empower and enable all our pupils, students, staff and apprentices to thrive and prosper.
- We will continue to build a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects and understands the sector that we serve.
- We will ensure all colleagues are valued and can contribute to our success.
- We will continue to value wellbeing, mental health and different styles of thinking, communicating and working.
- We will continue to actively consider the impact of how we work and our working environment on our wellbeing by providing effective, timely and good quality support to those who need it.
- We are committed to creating a respectful and inclusive environment, which includes holding everyone accountable for their behaviour whether in person or online.

- We will take **all reasonable steps** to prevent sexual harassment and harassment related to any protected characteristic, including harassment by third parties such as visitors, contractors or service users.
- We will not use confidentiality clauses or agreements to prevent staff from making allegations or disclosures relating to discrimination, harassment or victimisation, in line with the Employment Rights Act 2025.

Pupils, students and apprentices

- All pupils, students and apprentices are entitled to the best possible education that respects and addresses their individual learning needs.
- All pupils, students and apprentices should be free from discrimination, harassment or bullying, particularly with regard to their protected characteristics.
- All pupils, students and apprentices are given the opportunity to express their opinions and concerns with regard to OHC&AT and its discharging of its responsibilities with regard to equality.
- All pupils, students and apprentices have equality of opportunity with regard to learning experiences within and outcomes beyond OHC&AT life.
- OHC&AT will make all reasonable adaptations to maximise accessibility for all pupils, students and apprentices to all aspects of the curriculum and environment.
- All pupils, students and apprentices are expected to work within OHC&AT's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Appropriate support will be put in place or, if necessary, sanctions taken in the event of a breach.
- OHC&AT will set, monitor and update targets and practices designed to narrow the achievement gap for all pupils, students and apprentices.
- The diversity within the pupil, student and apprentice population is recognised, valued and celebrated.

Staff (including agency workers, governors, Trustees, Members and volunteers)

- We expect all staff to take personal responsibility for adhering to, upholding. promoting and applying this policy.
- Every employee is entitled to a working environment which promotes dignity and respect to all. Bullying, harassment or intimidation of any groups or individuals will not be tolerated.
- We take all reasonable steps to encourage job applications from as diverse a range of people as possible.
- Anyone responsible for making decisions about recruitment must not discriminate in any way.
- All staff have equality of opportunity with regard to support, mentoring, training and career progression.
- All staff are expected to work within OHC&AT's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy. Appropriate support will be put in place or, if necessary, sanctions taken in the event of a breach.
- The diversity within the staff population is recognised, valued and celebrated and, as far as possible, utilised positively to the benefit of the OHC&AT community.
- Staff are expected to behave as role models for pupils, students and apprentices and to reflect the aims and expectations of this policy at all times.

- Reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary to enable staff to carry out their role.

OHC&AT will:

- Ensure that the promotion and embedding of equality, diversity and inclusion is at the forefront of our organisation and how we encourage our pupils, students and apprentices to work.
- Ensure that resources are utilised fairly for the equal benefit of all pupils, students and apprentices.
- Make all reasonable and permissible adjustments to the fabric of the building and surrounding grounds to ensure a safe and accessible environment for all pupils, students, apprentices, staff and visitors.
- Not tolerate bullying, harassment or intimidation of any groups or individuals, within our own organisation or towards our pupils, students, apprentices or staff.
- Recognise our role within the community of our pupils, students and apprentices and their homes and within the wider community to present a positive image of our pupils, students and apprentices, recognising their abilities and achievements, celebrating their diversity.
- Work to ensure that our strategies, systems, processes and materials are accessible and informed by a commitment to equality and diversity.
- Collect and analyse data to ensure it is effectively monitoring both the successes and the achievement gaps between individual pupils, students and apprentices but also between protected characteristics on an annual basis.
- Create a culture of inclusion. This means creating a workplace where everyone feels welcome and respected, regardless of their background or characteristics.
- Provide training on diversity and inclusion to help employees to understand the importance of diversity and inclusion and to develop skills for working with people from different backgrounds.
- Celebrate diversity, for example by recognising employees' achievements, celebrating cultural holidays, and providing opportunities for employees to learn about different cultures.
- Hold employees accountable for their behaviour. This means taking action against employees who engage in discriminatory or harassing behaviour.
- Ensure that staff who raise concerns or disclose information relating to discrimination or harassment will be protected from detriment or victimisation under whistleblowing legislation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

OHC&AT Trustees will:

- Review and approve this policy on an annual basis
- Review equality, diversity and inclusion across the OHC&AT workforce via termly People Committee meetings.

The OHC&AT Executive Senior Leadership Team will:

- Ensure this policy is updated annually and is disseminated to all staff.
- Ensure that all pupils, students and apprentices are aware of OHC&AT's position on equality, diversity and inclusion and how it relates to them, through dissemination to Principals and Senior Leaders of OHC&AT provisions.

- Ensure all policies, documents and actions are assessed for their impact in terms of equality.
- Ensure adherence to this policy at all times via regular quality monitoring of OHC&AT provisions.

OHCAT Academy Local Governing Bodies will:

- Review the equality objectives for their school at least annually.

Principals, Senior Leadership Teams and Directors/Heads of Central Teams will:

- Ensure that equality and diversity are respected and celebrated within their Academy, College or staff team.
- Ensure that all staff in their Academy/College/team are aware of and abide by this policy.
- Publish equality objectives for their Academy or College at least every four years (Principals) or contribute to OHC&AT's overall equality objectives that are published every four years (Directors/Heads of Central Teams).
- Publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the equality duty at least annually (Principals) or contribute to the annual publication of OHC&AT's equality compliance information (Directors/Heads of Central Teams).
- Provide opportunities for staff to develop and maintain their understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion through regular, high quality CPD.
- Ensure proactive steps are taken within their areas of responsibility to identify, prevent and address discriminatory behaviours, including early intervention where risks are identified.

All staff will:

- Adhere to this policy at all times.
- Model best practice in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion at all times.
- Ensure that equality and diversity is an integral part of all activity planning and delivery.
- Participate in relevant CPD as required.
- Be open to challenging others, and being challenged, as necessary regarding equality, diversity and inclusion matters.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Admissions Policy
Anti-bullying policies (Academies/OHC)
Child Protection, Adult Protection & Safeguarding Policy
Complaints Policy and Procedure (Academies)
Complaints Policy and Procedure (OHC)
Dignity at Work Policy
Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
Employee Protection (Sexual Harassment) Policy
Family Friendly Policy and Procedures
Flexible Working Policy
Health & Safety Policy
Mental Capacity and Consent Policy (Academies)

Mental Capacity and Consent Policy (OHC)
Behaviour policies (Academies/OHC)
Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures
Relationships and sex education policies (Academies/OHC)
SEND policies and information reports (Academies/OHC)
Staff Code of Conduct
Staff Mental Wealth, Health and Wellbeing Policy
Student Mental Wealth, Health and Wellbeing Policy
Whistleblowing Policy