



PolyMAT

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

Reviewed September 2023
Approved: December 2023
Revision due: December 2024

Policy Statement

The Trust is committed to promoting and achieving equality of opportunity for all students, parents, staff, Governors, visitors and job applicants.

Policy reflects the Trust's current practices and applies to every individual working for the Trust, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, to job applicants and to individuals such as agency staff and consultants and volunteers who are not employees but who work at the Trust (collectively referred to as "Staff" in this policy).

This policy also applies to all PolyMAT stakeholders, including but not limited to; partners, suppliers and visitors.

Equality of opportunity at PolyMAT is based on the following core values:

- The aims and ethos of the Trust supports the development of self-respect and self esteem in all pupils, staff and the community it serves. The Trust aims to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make the best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit. We place a high value on diversity and treat every member of the Trust as an individual while being committed to promoting and achieving equality of opportunity.

This Policy does not form part of the terms and conditions of any employee's employment with the Trust and is not intended to have contractual effect and the Trust reserves the right to amend this policy at any time. However, this policy reflects the Trust's current practices and is provided for guidance to all Staff who are strongly encouraged to familiarise themselves with its content.

The Trust does not discriminate against staff on the basis of their sex, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, race (which covers colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, disability or age (the protected characteristics).

All staff are made aware of the need for the curriculum to reflect cultural diversity, non-discrimination, and equality of opportunity; and of the need to prepare pupils for life in a pluralist society.

We will meet our statutory obligations under relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010, which prohibits discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in employment. This policy conforms to the Equality Act 2010 and is monitored to ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation in force from time to time. The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat students, parents, visitors, suppliers, and former staff members.

Scope and Purpose of this Policy

PolyMAT is opposed to all forms of prejudice and discrimination, all Staff are required to support the implementation of this policy to ensure that discrimination does not occur.

Our policy endorses the three principles of inclusion in the National Curriculum:

- i. setting suitable learning challenges;
- ii. responding to pupils diverse learning needs;
- iii. overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

All Staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not discriminate against or harass other colleagues, regardless of their status. Your attention is drawn to our separate Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy for further details.

All Staff must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the Trust's aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities and diversity. Staff will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities for recruitment and selection best practice.

Any questions about the content or application of this policy should be referred to the Chief Operations Officer in the first instance.

This policy applies to all aspects of the Trust's relationship with Staff and to relations between Staff members at all levels. This includes:

- job advertisements;
- recruitment and selection;
- training and development;
- opportunities for promotion;
- conditions of service;
- pay and benefits;
- conduct at work;
- capability, disciplinary and grievance procedures; and
- termination of employment.

The Trust will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

Forms of Discrimination

Discrimination by or against a member of staff is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their sex or race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in the Trust's Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment or supported someone else's complaint.

Attainment and Progress

1. Our aim is to ensure all pupils achieve standards of the highest levels. Pupil's achievement is monitored by formal and informal procedures. It is analysed by ethnicity and background.
2. Any pattern of underachievement of a particular group is addressed through targeted curriculum planning, teaching and support.
3. The Trust will ensure, where possible, that assessment is free of cultural and social bias. Baseline assessment is used appropriately for all pupils.
4. All children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through regular reflection and their progress.
5. Progress reports to parents are accessible and appropriate, in order to ensure all parents, have the opportunity to participate in the dialogue.
6. All forms of achievement are recognised and valued.

Attitudes and Environment

1. The Trust promotes positive approaches to difference, fostering respect for people and property. Language or behaviour, which is racist, sexist, homophobic or potentially damaging to any group, will not be tolerated.
2. There is high expectation of all pupils with regard to behaviour and attendance.
3. All forms of harassment, including racism, sexism and homophobia, are recorded, monitored and dealt with in line with the schools' behaviour and anti-bullying policies.
4. Pupils, staff and parents are aware of procedures should incidents of harassment arise, and all staff operate consistent systems of rewards and discipline.
5. The Trust works in partnership with parents and the community to tackle specific incidents of harassment and to development positive attitudes to difference.
6. Staff members receive regular training and are encouraged to explore their own views and attitudes to difference and to monitor their practice in relation to this policy. Adults in the Trust take care to lead through example, demonstrating high expectations of all children.
7. It is recognised that cultural background may affect behaviour. The Trust takes this into account when dealing with incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
8. Pupils are encouraged to become independent and to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Admission, attendance discipline and exclusion

1. Exclusions and attendance are monitored by ethnicity, special educational need and background.
2. The Trust and families are aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to pupil attendance and absence is followed up by appropriate personnel who are aware of community issues.
3. Comprehensive information about pupils' ethnicity, first language, religion, physical and learning needs, diet is included on all admission forms.

Teaching

1. All children are encouraged to become responsible for their own learning.

2. Teaching is responsive to pupils' different learning styles in order to engage all pupils.
3. The teacher ensures that the classroom is an inclusive environment in which children feel all contributions are valued. Where groups or individuals are marginalized, the teacher takes positive steps to include them.
4. Teaching styles include collaborative learning, so those children appreciate the value of working together. All children are encouraged to question, discuss and collaborate in problem solving tasks.
5. Pupil grouping in the classroom is planned and varied.
6. Teachers challenge stereotypes and foster pupils' critical awareness and concepts of fairness, enabling them to detect bias and challenge inequalities.
7. Resources and displays reflect the experience and background of pupils, promote diversity and challenge stereotype in all curriculum areas.
8. All resources are reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect the inclusive ethos of the school.

Curriculum

1. Each area of the curriculum is planned to incorporate the principles of equality and to promote positive attitudes.
2. All pupils have access to mainstream curriculum.
3. The curriculum builds on pupils' starting points and is differentiated appropriately:
 - For pupils with English as an additional language
 - For pupils from different ethnic groups, where necessary
 - For pupils with Special Educational Needs
4. The content of the curriculum reflects and values cultural diversity.
5. The curriculum encourages pupils to explore bias and to challenge prejudice and stereotypes.
6. All subjects contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.
7. Extra curricular activities and special events cater for the interests and capabilities of all pupils and take account of parental concerns related to religion and culture.

8. Informal events are designed to include the whole Trust community but at times will target individual groups or schools.

Policy, Leadership and Management

1. All Trust policies reflect a commitment to equal opportunities.
2. The management of the Trust, the Trustees and the local governing body set a clear ethos, which reflects the Trust's commitment to all its pupils and staff.
3. Teaching and curriculum development are monitored to ensure high expectations of all pupils and appropriate breadth of content in relation to the Trust and wider community.
4. All staff members are consulted in the decision-making process.
5. Additional grants and resources (such as those provided for Traveller pupils and for those with English as an additional language) are appropriately targeted and monitored.

Staffing – Recruitment and Selection

The Trust aims to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics as mentioned above. The Trust's recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job and are not disproportionate.

Job advertisements will avoid using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying. A short policy statement on equal opportunities and a copy of this policy shall be sent on request to those who enquire about vacancies.

The Trust will take steps to ensure that its vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market and, where relevant, to particular groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented in the Trust.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which the Trust may use, for example:

- Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments);
- Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment;
- Positive action to recruit disabled persons; and
- Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

Applicants will not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants will not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without first considering whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account.

The Trust is required by law to ensure that all members of staff are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective members of staff, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce the requisite original documents or satisfy the necessary online checks before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. A list of acceptable documents is available from the Trust HR Manager.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in the Trust, the Trust will monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary, and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information will be removed from applications before shortlisting and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us to take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

Staffing – Training, conditions of service and Professional Development

1. All staff, including non-teaching and part time staff are given status and support.
2. The induction of new staff addresses issues of equality.
3. Staff training and handbooks include equal opportunities issues.
4. Staff training needs will be identified through informal and formal staff appraisals.
5. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the School and all promotion decisions will be on the basis of merit.
6. All members of staff have access to INSET, which will enable professional development.
7. Staff reflects ethnic and gender diversity at all levels.
8. The skills of all staff members are recognised and valued, and staff are encouraged to share their knowledge.
9. Staff and visitors provide a wide a range of role models and reflect the diversity of the local and wider community.

10. There is a named senior member of staff responsible for equal opportunities in each School.
11. The Trust's conditions of service, benefits and facilities will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are available to all Staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

Recruitment of Staff with a Criminal Record

The Trust is an organisation that uses the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to assess candidates' suitability for positions of trust working in an environment with children or vulnerable adults. The Trust complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all candidates fairly.

The Trust endeavours not to discriminate unlawfully against any candidate who is required to provide information (a check) through this process. Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent a candidate from working with the Trust. Whether or not it does will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offence(s).

The Trust's policy on the recruitment of those with a criminal record will be made available to all candidates at the outset of the recruitment process. The Trust will ensure that it makes any candidate who is subject to check aware of the DBS Code of Practice and will provide a copy of the Code on request.

As a DBS check is part of the Trust's recruitment process, the Trust encourages all candidates called to interview to provide details of any criminal record (except cautions and convictions which are "protected" (as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013 and 2020) at an early stage of the application process. The Trust requests that this information is sent under separate confidential cover to a designated person, in this case, the Business Manager of the Trust. The Trust guarantees that only those who need to see the information as part of the recruitment process will see this information.

The Trust will ensure that it discusses with the candidate the relevance of any offence to the job in question. A candidate's failure to reveal information directly relevant to the job could result in the withdrawal of an offer of employment.

Parents, Local Academy Committee Members and Community Partnership

1. All parents are encouraged to participate at all levels in the full life of the schools in the Trust.
2. Information and meetings for parents are made accessible for all. Parental involvement is monitored to ensure the participation of all groups.

3. We will ensure that Local Academy Committee Member support is appropriate for all ethnic groups.
4. We will encourage people from ethnic communities to become school Local Academy Committee Members.
5. We will strive to work closely and in particular with local ethnic and religious community organisations.

Disability Discrimination

If a member of Staff is disabled or becomes disabled, in the course of his or her employment with the Trust, they are encouraged to tell us about his or her condition. This is to enable us to support the member of Staff appropriately.

If a member of staff experiences difficulties at work because of their disability, they may wish to contact their Line Manager/Head of Department to discuss any reasonable adjustments to his or her working conditions or duties which they consider to be reasonable and necessary, or which would assist in the performance of his or her duties.

The Line Manager/Head of Department may wish to consult with the member of staff and their medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals, and they will be accommodated where reasonable, practicable, and proportionate in all the circumstances of the case.

Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it would not be reasonable for the Trust to accommodate a particular adjustment and in such circumstances, it will ensure that it provides the member of staff with its reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

The Trust will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether they place disabled staff, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonably practicable and proportionate the Trust will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

Termination of employment

1. The Trust will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.
2. The Trust will also ensure that absence, capability and disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination and are carried out fairly and uniformly for all staff, whether they result in formal warnings, dismissal or other action.

Fixed-Term Employees and Agency/Temporary Workers

The Trust will monitor its use of fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service to ensure they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. The Trust will also, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

Part-Time Workers

The Trust will monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. It will also ensure that requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under the Trust's Flexible Working Policy.

Complaints of Discrimination, Victimisation and Harassment on the Protected Characteristics

The Trust will treat seriously and will take action where appropriate concerning all complaints of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation related or connected to any of the protected characteristics made by any of its staff, students, or other third parties seriously and will take action where appropriate.

Any member of staff who considers that they may have been unlawfully discriminated against, victimised, or harassed within the meaning of this policy should discuss the matter in the first instance with their Line Manager/Head of Department or, if inappropriate under the circumstances of the case, with the Head of School. In some cases, it may be possible to resolve the matter informally and reach a satisfactory resolution.

If a member of Staff wishes to make a formal complaint, then they should raise the matter through the Trust's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and will be investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure and the member of Staff will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation and provide an explanation for his or her actions.

Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. If the Trust concludes that the allegations are false or have been made maliciously or in bad faith, it will deal with the matter in accordance with its Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Any member of Staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination, victimisation, or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Trust takes a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

Monitoring of the policy

Monitoring of this policy in relation to pupils should include:

- Analysis of examination results to include attainment and value-added of the various ethnic, social and learning ability groups
- Analysis of punishment and reward records
- Analysis of exclusion
- Analysis of racism, racial harassment, sexism and bullying
- Analysis of Post 16 destinations
- Analysis of parental involvement in the life of the schools (including membership of the governing body) by ethnicity, gender and social class

Monitoring of the policy in relation to staffing should include:

- A breakdown of staffing structure by ethnicity, gender and disability
- A breakdown of professional development activities undertaken, by ethnicity, gender, disability – as well as department

Reporting on the impact of the policy

To ensure that our policy is being deployed as it should, to raise attainment and expectations for all, it is suggested that the Trust reports it's monitoring to the Trustees' Board on at least on an annual basis, perhaps to coincide with the reporting of the examination results. The effectiveness of the policy should be evaluated on an annual basis.