

## Equality & Diversity Policy: Staff

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Date: February 2020

Review date: February 2023

*At the Lime Trust, we are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all our workforce regardless of class, disability, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, family make-up, belief (religious or non-religious), or any other individual special need.*

## Introduction

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We pride ourselves on being an inclusive Trust, where we celebrate diversity and difference, and acknowledge the richness that this brings to our school communities. We aim to provide opportunities for all employees and job applicants regardless of sex, gender, gender identity and reassignment, sexual orientation, race, age, disability, religion or belief, pregnancy/maternity and marital/partnership status.

Each of our academies is led by the Lime Trust values. Our values encourage all stakeholders to display the behaviours expected of a member of our workforce: **Respect, Equality, Self-worth, Partnership, Enjoyment, Communication and Trust**. All members of our community are of equal worth.

This policy is an umbrella policy, which covers, and is inseparably linked to, every other Trust/school policy, including equal opportunities, safeguarding, health and safety, recruitment and selection policies.

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.

Our approach to equality is based on the following 5 key principles:

1. **All employees are of equal value.** Whether or not they are disabled; whatever their age; whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status; whatever their sex, gender and gender identity, and sexual orientation; whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background.
2. **We recognise, respect and value difference, and understand and promote the idea 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, age, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief or faith. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
3. **We foster positive attitudes and relationships.** We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.
4. **We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging.** We want all members of our workforce to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community. Also, to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully within the Trust and our schools.
5. **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.

The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which our staff and Governors treat visitors, volunteers, contractors and former staff members.

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades within our Trust, including senior managers, full/part-time and permanent/fixed-term employees, trainees, volunteers, casual workers, agency staff (collectively referred to as 'employees', 'staff' or 'workers' in this policy) and all our Governors from all tiers within our Trust governance structure (i.e. Members, Trustees, Academy Councils).

## Aims and objectives

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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, as an employer, the Trust cannot discriminate against our staff, or treat them less favourably because of their:

- sex (gender)
- race
- disability

- religion or belief
- gender reassignment
- sexual orientation
- pregnancy/maternity
- age
- marriage/civil partnership

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

1. The Public-Sector Equality Duty or 'general duty': this requires all public organisations, including schools, to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between different groups.
  - Foster good relations between different groups.
2. Two 'specific duties': these require all public organisations, including schools, to:
  - Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty.
  - Publish specific and measurable Equality objectives at least every 4 years.

The Equality Act also applies to schools in their role as employers, and the way the Trust complies with this can be found in our Recruitment Policy.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against, or harass, other members of staff, regardless of their status.

## Responsibilities

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### Our Trust Board/Academy Councils

Our Trust Board and Academy Councils are responsible for ensuring that our academies comply with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented. Every Academy Council keeps aspects of their school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment.

### Our CEO/Headteachers & Leadership Teams

Our CEO and Headteachers are responsible for implementing the policy at Trust and academy level; 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.

### Our Managers/Employees

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

All our members of staff are personally responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. In certain circumstances, the Trust/academy could be held to be vicariously liable for actions of academy staff. However, staff should be aware that they may also be personally liable if they are found to have discriminated against another person whilst on Trust/School premises or on Trust/School-related business.

## Policy

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, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

We will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities. Please see the following policies for specific information on our approach to these issues: Leave of Absence, Recruitment & Selection, Flexible Working and Maternity policies.

### **Forms of discrimination**

Discrimination by, or against, an employee 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 race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination is where there is a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone, but adversely affects people with a particular protected characteristic more than others and is not justified. For example, a requirement to work full-time adversely affects women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will be discriminatory unless it is 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 our Grievance 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.

Disability discrimination includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

### **Staff training and promotion, and conditions of service**

Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit. Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly 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.

### **Discipline and Termination of Employment**

We will ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

### **Disability discrimination**

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition, so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you should speak to your line manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers or job applicants at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff.

### **Fixed-term employees, casual and agency workers**

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

### **Part-time work**

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

### **Breaches of this policy**

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against, you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Policy.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.

### **Development of the Policy**

This policy has been ratified by the Lime Trust Board. It is part of our commitment to promoting equality and being an inclusive employer. When developing the policy, we took account of the DfE guidance on the Equality Act 2010.

### **What we are doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation**

- We ensure that everyone working in, or coming into contact with, our Trust are treated fairly and not discriminated against on the basis of any of the protected characteristics.
- We are aware of our Reasonable Adjustment duty and, where required, make reasonable adjustments for our staff, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged when carrying out their role.
- Our CEO and Headteachers ensure 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, complying fully with current equalities legislation.
- We ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones.
- We aim for our workforce to reflect the diverse society we serve and provide a working environment free from any form of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying or victimisation.

### **Recruitment & Selection**

All recruitment will be carried out in accordance with the Trust's Recruitment and Selection Policy, which is aimed at ensuring that the most suitable candidate is appointed fairly to the job.

All advertisements will inform the candidate that the Trust values equality and diversity. The selection process includes anonymised candidates to ensure that the selection is done without unconscious bias and on the true basis of an individual's merits and abilities.

Applicants will be asked to complete an equality and diversity monitoring form, which is separate from the application form and will be used for monitoring purposes only and does not form any part of the selection process.

### **What we are doing to advance equality of opportunity for different groups**

- We know the needs of our workforce and collect and analyse data in order to help with our succession planning.
- We collect data and monitor progress and outcomes of different groups of our workforce to improve recruitment processes.

### **Positive Action**

We will take positive and proportionate action to address the disadvantage faced by particular groups of staff with protected characteristics. The actions will be designed to meet the Trust's Equality Objectives.

### **Equal Opportunities for Staff**

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This section deals with aspects of equal opportunities relating to 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, as far as possible, that the staffing of the Trust 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 practices of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.
- We ensure that all members of staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups, or teams.

### **Disseminating the policy**

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This Equality Policy is available:

- On our Trust and school websites
- On the Trust/school staff computer network/internal portal
- As paper copies in our Trust/school offices
- As part of induction for new staff

We also ensure that the whole Trust workforce knows about the policy, objectives and data through staff meetings and other communications.