Pupil Equality, Diversity and Accessibility Policy

Contents:

Statement of intent

1. Legal framework
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. Protected characteristics
4. Sex
5. Race and ethnicity
6. Disability
7. Religion and belief
8. Sexual orientation
9. Gender reassignment
10. Looked after children (LAC)
11. The curriculum
12. Promoting inclusion
13. The Public Sector Equality Duty
14. Bullying and discrimination
15. Staff training
16. Monitoring and review

Statement of intent

The Free School Norwich understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, all schools have a duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality between different groups.
- Foster good relations between different groups.
- Promote mental health and wellbeing.

Our school's overall values are underpinned by our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. We are dedicated to ensuring that every pupil receives an education that offers them the best chance at fulfilling their potential, and to promoting mental wellbeing amongst our pupils. We are committed to supporting and celebrating all pupils' individual identities. We have developed this policy to provide a clear framework for how we will achieve our school's aims.

Our school's demographic state is directly linked to our overall aims for achieving equality. Specifically, we aim to:

- Offer equal opportunities regardless of race, culture, gender orientation, academic ability, physical ability or class.
- Provide an environment free from social, sexual or cultural prejudice for all members of our school and the wider community.
- Achieve an environment in which members of the school community can be respected as individuals and in which the varied experiences of the community can enrich the life of the school.

To achieve our aims, we will adopt the following methods:

- Embedding equality within teaching and resources
- Using key data indicators to understand the needs and characteristics of our school
- Promoting community cohesion
- Promoting parental engagement
- Investing in regular staff training
- Using key data, such as measures of wellbeing and pupil voice to monitor the progress of pupils with protected characteristics
- Regularly reviewing our policy to ensure it reflects current trends and issues

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

This policy has due regard to statutory and good practice guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2018) Equality Act 2010: Advice for Schools
- DfE (2018) Gender Separation in Mixed Schools
- DfE (2018) Promoting the Education of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children
- DfE (2018) Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools
- DfE (2026 or current edition) Keeping Children Safe in Education
- HM Government (2023) Working Together to Safeguard Children

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Attendance Policy
- RSE Policy
- School Uniform Policy
- Admissions Policy
- LAC Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees will:

- Be responsible for ensuring the school complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure pupils and potential pupils will not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised in relation to:
  - Admissions.
  - The way the school provides and education for pupils.
  - How pupils are provided with access to benefits, facilities and services.
  - The exclusion of a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

- Ensure all policies are developed and implemented with appropriate equality impact assessments informing future plans in collaboration with the Principal.

The Principal will:

- Implement and champion this policy, ensuring that all staff and pupils apply its guidelines fairly in all situations.
- Conduct regular training sessions to ensure all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities, as well as to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Review and amend this policy, taking into account new legislation and government guidance, and previously reported incidents, in order to improve procedures.
- Ensure that appropriate counselling is made available for pupils who require immediate interventions, parental assistance and personal counselling.

Staff will:

- Be alert to the possible harassment of pupils, both inside and outside of the school, and to deal with incidents of harassment and/or discrimination as the highest priority.
- Carry out their statutory duties relating to equal opportunities and inclusivity and pertaining to their specific roles.
- Have due regard to the sensitivities of all pupils, and not provide material that may cause offence.
- Act as a role model for equality, diversity and inclusion across the whole school community.

Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics are:

- Age (for staff, not generally pupils)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership (staff only)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment.

Staff will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic related to a person, such as a parent, with whom the pupil or prospective pupil is associated.

Staff will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic which they are believed to have, even if the belief is mistaken.

3. Sex

For the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, sex refers to whether a person is male or female.

The school understands that some pupils identify as a gender different to the sex they were assigned at birth, and we will support pupils where necessary.

Staff will ensure that pupils of one sex are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to pupils of other sexes.

The school will only separate pupils by sex where there is reasonable justification for doing so, or if one of the following applies:

- Pupils will suffer a disadvantage connected to their sex
- One sex has needs that are different from the needs of the other sex
- Participation in an activity by pupils of one sex is disproportionately low

The school will consider non-statutory exceptions on a case-by-case basis and regularly review the impact of any separation to ascertain whether it remains lawful.

Pupils will be offered equal opportunities to undertake any activity in the school, e.g. in relation to technology lessons, all pupils will be allowed to choose which skills they learn.

There may be occasions where we deem it necessary to teach some subjects in single-sex classes, but the school will ensure that such classes do not give pupils a disadvantage when compared to pupils of the other sex in other classes. Occasions where pupils are separated to be taught in single-sex classes will be documented and the separation justified to ensure parents, Ofsted and, where necessary, the wider community can understand the reasons behind separation.

Pupils' age and stage of development will be taken into consideration before segregating sports teams. Both sexes will have equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities; where separation is deemed necessary, the single-sex sports teams will receive the same quality and amount of resources.

4. Race and ethnicity

Staff will ensure that pupils of all races and ethnicities are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils and the school will regularly review its practices to ensure that they are fair.

Staff will ensure that all pupils with EAL are treated equally and fairly, while ensuring they are supported at all times.

The school will not segregate pupils on the basis of their race or ethnicity, understanding that claims of 'separate but equal' will not be tolerated, and that such actions will always be viewed as direct discrimination.

5. Disability

Staff will ensure that pupils with disabilities are not singled out or treated less favourably than other pupils simply because they have a disability. We regularly review our school practices regarding disability, including mental health conditions that meet the definition of a disability under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure they are fair.

The school will avoid implementing rules that could have an adverse effect on pupils with disabilities (e.g. by making physical fitness a basis for admission or requiring all pupils to complete an activity in the same way where reasonable adjustments may be required for some pupils), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

Staff will ensure that they do not discriminate against pupils with disabilities because of something which is a consequence of their disability (for example, by not allowing a pupil on crutches outside at break time because it would take too long for them to get in and out), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

The school will make any reasonable adjustments, and provide any auxiliary aids, necessary to ensure the full inclusion of pupils with disabilities, especially where the pupil also has SEND but does not have a SEND statement or EHC plan.

The school will meet its duty to undertake accessibility planning for pupils with disabilities and ensure that an Accessibility Plan is implemented and reviewed where necessary.

The school will adhere to its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for pupils with SEND.

6. Religion and belief

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because of their religion or belief.

The school will ensure that, where appropriate, pupils are provided with the appropriate space in which they can practice their faith, e.g. to perform their daily prayers.

Absences in relation to religious observances will be handled in accordance with the school's Attendance and Absence Policy.

The school will liaise with local religious leaders of all faiths to inform the amount of leave pupils will be granted in relation to religious observance.

7. Sexual orientation

Staff will ensure that all gay, lesbian and bisexual pupils, or the children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents, are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

The school will ensure that pupils are taught about the nature of marriage, including same-sex marriage, by presenting the facts of English and Welsh law – teachers will not offer personal opinions when discussing marriage in RSE. The school will educate pupils about a range of relationships, families and protected characteristics through the RSE curriculum in an age-appropriate manner.

Staff will ensure that any religious beliefs with regards to sexual orientation are taught to pupils in an educational context, in a manner that is not prejudicial or discriminatory.

Staff will support LGBTQ+ pupils to feel comfortable and ensure they can celebrate their identity.

The school will ensure that there is a designated safe space where pupils can discuss issues of sexual orientation without fear of discrimination.

8. Gender reassignment

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably in relation to gender reassignment, i.e. because they are trans or have trans parents, siblings or other family members. The school recognises that gender reassignment does not necessarily involve physical change and can be solely social and emotional.

The school will consider requests relating to uniform, names, pronouns and other aspects of social transition on an individual basis, taking account of the pupil's welfare, safeguarding considerations, parental involvement where appropriate, and relevant legal guidance.

The school will ensure that there are suitable toilet facilities for pupils to use, including:

- Gender-specific toilets.
- Private changing facilities.

The school will support pupils who are considering or undergoing gender reassignment and ensure they are treated with dignity, respect and without discrimination.

The school will ensure that there is a designated safe space within the school where trans pupils can discuss issues of gender without fear of discrimination.

9. Looked-after children (LAC)

LAC and previously LAC (PLAC) will be given the highest priority for admissions, as per the requirements of our Admissions Policy.

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are looked after, or have previously been looked after, by the state.

A personal education plan will be created and implemented for all LAC and PLAC, to ensure that their education and development needs are fully covered, including appropriate transition and catch-up support to ensure that they do not fall behind.

Staff will ensure that any SEND that LAC or PLAC have are duly taken into account and addressed, whether this is with or without a SEND statement or EHC plan.

The school will adhere to its LAC Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for LAC.

10.The curriculum

Pupils will be exposed to thoughts and ideas of all kinds, and the school will not make any unjustified changes to curriculum content on the grounds of any protected characteristics that a pupil may have. The school will ensure, however, that the curriculum is as balanced as possible, and delivered in such a way that prevents discrimination and the promotion of prejudicial stereotypes.

To ensure equality, diversity and acceptance are taught and promoted throughout each subject area and as part of our CUTHRIVE programme, the school will:

- Understand and celebrate difference in all subject areas through teaching about the importance and value of being an individual.
- Celebrate other cultures through assemblies and follow up lessons.
- Give children the knowledge to make informed decisions about the diverse community they have around them and provide a safe space for them to discuss their thoughts and address any misconceptions.
- Model respect for all groups regardless of race, culture, gender orientation, academic or physical ability or class, and expect children to share this respect.
- Through the development of the Bystander Intervention programme, tackle all forms of gender stereotyping and use of derogatory language.
- Where practically feasible, ensure that all children have equal access to all curriculum areas .
- The observation of inclusive teaching strategies will remain a key aspect of the SLT's annual programme of monitoring.
- Ensure that every child has an entitlement to a positive, helpful learning environment, with carefully planned work which matches their individual needs, in order that they may reach their potential.

The school will respect the right of parents to withdraw their child from sex education.

11.Promoting inclusion

The school will promote inclusion and equality at our school through:

- Ensuring that pupils are called by their preferred names, which may be different from their legal names, taking into account the correct spelling, structure and pronunciation.
- Ensuring, as far as possible, that our Board of Trustees and staff reflect the full diversity of our local community.
- Providing an environment where prejudiced assumptions, attitudes and behaviours are continually challenged.

- Instilling in pupils an awareness of prejudice, giving them confidence that it can, and must, be eradicated.
- Providing a variety of educational and residential visits that expose pupils to a wide range of cultural experiences.
- Ensuring equal access to opportunities, such as extracurricular activities and the curriculum.
- Taking care in the use of language and the choice of resources, so that teaching and non-teaching staff avoid reinforcing stereotypical views of society.
- Valuing the cultural experiences and contributions of all pupils, regardless of any protected characteristic that they may have.
- Communicating our policy to parents to gain their understanding, agreement and support for its provisions.
- Discussing equality issues as an agenda item for the school council.
- Promoting equality of opportunity within the wider society.
- Ensuring admission arrangements will not unfairly disadvantage a pupil from a particular social or racial group, or with SEND.

12.The Public Sector Equality Duty

The school will meet its duty to publish:

- Annual information to demonstrate how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, taking into account the specific circumstances surrounding pupils who have any of the protected characteristics outlined in the Protected characteristics section of this policy.
- Equality objectives (at least every four years) outlining how the school may further equality.

There are some protected characteristics where statistical data is less likely to be readily available, and pupils will not be pressured into providing information related to any characteristic which they may identify with.

13.Bullying and discrimination

Our Anti-bullying Policy will be used in conjunction with this policy in order to prevent, and effectively deal with, any discriminatory incidents.

Any bullying incidents of a child protection or safeguarding nature will be reported, recorded and dealt with in line with the process in our Safeguarding Policy.

The Principal will decide whether it is appropriate to notify social services and/or the police of any incident.

Concerns with regards to the handling of bullying and discrimination incidents will be dealt with via the procedures outlined in the Complaints Procedures Policy.

14.Staff training

New staff will receive relevant training on the provisions of this policy during their induction.

Whole-school staff training for will be delivered in-house as part of coaching and mentoring sessions.

Staff will receive the appropriate equalities training that will:

- Focus on staff specialisms in relation to equality, for example, a focus on homophobic bullying to address a planned approach towards inclusion.
- Ensure all staff are aware of, and comply with, current equalities legislation and government recommendations.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and how they can support pupils with protected characteristics.
- Provide support for teachers to effectively manage any discrimination towards pupils with protected characteristics.
- Provide up-to-date information on the terms, concepts and current understandings relating to each of the protected characteristics.
- Develop appropriate strategies for communication between parents, educators and pupils about any issues related to a protected characteristic.
- Ensure that the school is aware of, and participates in, relevant awareness days, such as Black History Month, World Disability Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, Pride, and International Women's Day.

15.Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the Principal and Board of Trustees annually and updated where appropriate – any amendments will be duly communicated to staff.

Principal: Darren Webster
Chair of Trustees: Julia Virgoe
Policy approved: November 2026
Policy Review Date: November 2027