

# Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

## **Mission Statement**

Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST); a family of schools formed around two clusters, each including primary schools and secondary schools. WeST holds a deep seated belief in education and lifelong learning. WeST holds a firm belief in giving each individual every opportunity to learn and succeed in all that they do. Effective collaboration, mutual support and professional challenge will underpin our quest to ensure that all of the children and adults we serve are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed in life. We believe that by working collectively, sharing what works well and jointly developing best practice we are stronger together and can provide the best service to our stakeholders.

Westcountry Schools' Trust adopted this policy in September 2017, and this has been updated in accordance with the schedule overleaf.

Westcountry Schools' Trust will review this policy annually.



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### 1. Introduction

This policy describes the way in which WeST will meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equalities Duty. The Act replaces all previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. This policy will set out how WeST intends to fulfil its responsibilities with regards to its learners and workforce.

WeST recognises that as a family of schools we share common values and beliefs, however all our schools are unique and hold their own identity. Therefore it is anticipated local school units may have a personalised statement regarding equality and diversity in addition to this trust wide commitment, this may also form part of the school improvement plans.

### 2. Access

Employees, learners and volunteers are made aware of the existence of this policy and where it can be accessed.

The current version of this policy will be available from the WeST website and school websites shall hold copies of any local supporting documentation.

For new employees joining the trust, the induction programme document includes a review of relevant policies and records the date completed.

### 3. Policy Statement

WeST will adhere to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by not discriminating against learners, staff, volunteers or anyone involved in external agencies the organisation may be working with on the grounds of characteristics specified in the Act.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

It is expected that every person in the organisation will make a positive contribution to this policy, namely:

- All staff whether paid or voluntary
- All visitors to a WeST academy

### 4. Equality and Diversity Commitments

WeST is committed to ensuring consideration is given to equality and diversity in all activities, with particular regard to the shaping of policies and procedures, development and delivery of services and in relation to employer decisions.

In accordance with the equality duty, WeST is committed to ensuring due regard to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

- fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In addition, WeST will:

- WeST is committed to a policy of equality and aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant, student/pupil, or other member of the Trust community is treated less favourably on the grounds of a protected characteristic.
- Any behaviour, comments, or attitudes that threaten or deliberately undermine this commitment will not be tolerated. We aim to provide equal access to high quality educational/employment opportunities and to ensure that everyone feels that they are a valued member of the Trust/school community. We seek to provide a safe and happy environment where all can flourish and where cultural diversity is celebrated.
- We aim to empower our students/pupils to make informed choices so that they are better prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life within their community.
- Equality of opportunity cannot be realised without the involvement and commitment of all members of the Trust/school community and a common understanding of the pivotal role of equal opportunities in the context of the Trust's ethos and values, in particular, the recognition that the role of all staff is crucial in the delivery of the objectives of the policy.
- Ensure that the services it provides are accessible to all and endeavour to positively encourage and benefit people from disadvantaged groups.
- Supply specialist aids and facilities to enable disabled people.
- Monitor any issues that arise within the organisation and take appropriate action, fully supporting any person in the organisation who is faced with prejudice or discrimination.
- Undertake an annual evaluation process to ensure that the policy is clear, in keeping with current legislation and being adhered to.
- Treat seriously any breaches of the policy, regarding them as misconduct which may lead to disciplinary proceedings.

### 5. Specific Considerations

Based on the principle that people should not be discriminated against in schools' provision on the basis of any of the protected characteristics set out in the Act, when seeking admission to schools, when accessing the education and benefits provided, or by being excluded from school. This does not necessarily mean that education providers should treat everybody in exactly the same way: in some circumstances, an education provider will need to deliver in a range of ways to meet the differing needs of people so that all receive the same standard of education as others as far as this is possible.

Therefore WeST may decide to use the 'Positive Action' clause of the Equality Act 2010, which allows for the setting up of courses specifically for a certain group, such as Afro-Caribbean boys or Roma children.

When recruiting new employees, this shall be in accordance with the trust Recruitment and Selection Policy which specifies processes in relation to ensuring non-discriminatory and equality opportunity commitments.

WeST will record, monitor and report data concerning gender pay gap in accordance with the legislative requirements.

The principals of this commitment will also work alongside the provision of the Code of Conduct for WeST and relevant policy arrangements.

### **6. Raising Concerns**

Any stakeholder who believes that this policy has not been applied as intended should immediately bring the situation to the attention of the parties concerned. Where this is not possible or where serious potential breaches arise the individual may wish to raise a complaint in accordance with the trust policy and process.

Where the individual identifying a potential breach of this policy is an employee, they should refer to the Grievance Policy to explore both informal and formal resolution. This policy shall operate alongside the current provision for Code of Conduct and Acceptable Behaviour Policy.

## Policy History

Policy / Version Date	Summary of change	Contact	Implementation Date	Review Date
July 2013	Policy Implemented	HR	July 2013	As necessary and appropriate
May 2017	Policy updated due to the change in Trust name and the delegation of authority	HR WeST	TBC	Annual Review
September 2017	Reviewed to incorporate date of publication, additional PCE role	HR WeST	September 2017	Annual Review
February 2019	Policy review	HR WeST	February 2019	Annual Review