



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

This document applies to all schools and operations of the Vale Academy Trust:

www.vale-academy.org

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For the purpose of this document the 'Trust' and 'We' refers to the Vale Academy Trust

Aims

The Trust will ensure that all policies and practices conform with the principle of equal opportunities and comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The Trust and its schools embrace obligations under the public sector equality duty by committing to:

- Eliminate discrimination which is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

Through the operation of this policy the Trust aims to:

- Communicate the commitment of the Trust and each school to the promotion of equal opportunities
- Strive to go beyond compliance by setting our own Trust goals (see Appendix A)
- Promote equal opportunity across the Trust and in each school for all members of the school community
- Create and maintain an open and supportive environment which is free from discrimination
- Foster positive attitudes so that everyone feels valued
- Remove existing barriers, or help to overcome these
- Ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against any person on any ground listed under the protected characteristics
- To ensure that any person with a disability can benefit from provision to the same extent as a person who does not have a disability.
- Publish information to demonstrate how the Trust complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Prepare and publish equality objectives.

Vision Statement

The Vale Academy Trust believes that everyone matters and makes a difference. The Trust's ethos of equality, diversity and inclusion exemplifies our Trust values of respect, ambition, collaboration, integrity and kindness. Our vision is to go beyond compliance with our legal obligations, to promote a values based culture where everyone is included and nobody is disadvantaged, and where barriers to inclusion have been identified and removed as far as reasonably possible. Equality, diversity and inclusion runs through our business operations, leadership and governance. We embed and embody this ethos through our education of young people and our interactions with our wider community, reflecting our sound moral and ethical principles so that everyone feels valued, encouraged and empowered through their connection to the Vale Academy Trust.

Definitions

Equality “ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity, and no one should be put at a disadvantage because of their protected characteristics or other characteristics” (The Equality and Human Rights Commission)

Diversity the acknowledgement of the positive value that differences between people and groups of people provides

Inclusion to embrace all regardless of their characteristics and provide equal access and opportunity

Rationale

The Vale Academy Trust believes that action to promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is important because:

1. We prepare young people to build a brilliant future for themselves in a world that is increasingly diverse in every aspect of life. Our Trust’s values and practices reflect the diverse world that our pupils live in and will move forward to participate in as engaged citizens.
2. The local demographic is changing as house building gathers momentum and people relocate to the area from more diverse areas. The Trust embraces differences in parental and pupil social identities.
3. The Trust will be better placed to achieve its strategic aims if the workplace is inclusive of people aligned to common values and objectives about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
4. The Trust will be better able to attract and retain the best talent if it can appeal to the broadest spectrum of candidates.
5. The Trust will facilitate the contribution, development and progression of all staff in order to achieve its goals, including the identification and removal of barriers to these opportunities.
6. The Trust mirrors the National Curriculum inclusion principles in its policies and practices.
7. The Trust, corporately and individually, must comply with legal requirements and meet its Public Sector Equality Duties: this requires constant vigilance, education and awareness.
8. It is the right thing to do, morally and ethically, to allow people to benefit from educational and employment opportunities irrespective of their social identity.

Forms of Discrimination

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic as set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant of one race because it is considered they would not ‘fit in’ on the grounds of their race would be direct discrimination. Direct discrimination also occurs when a person is treated

less favourably because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic (other than pregnancy or maternity).

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for example, their gender or race. For example, a minimum height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If these criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with gender, they would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of gender.

Discrimination arising from disability

Discrimination arising from disability occurs when a person with a disability is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and the treatment cannot be shown to be proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Equal opportunities education provider

Each Trust school admits pupils irrespective of their protected characteristics and will not discriminate on these grounds in the terms on which a place is offered.

Equal access – pupils

Each school will afford all pupils equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects including all sports, irrespective of their protected characteristics, subject to considerations of health, safety and welfare.

Positive action

Schools may afford pupils of a particular racial group, or pupils with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the special needs of the pupils in that group, for example, special language training for groups whose first language is not English.

Suspensions & Permanent Exclusions

The Trust will not discriminate against any pupil by suspending or permanently excluding the pupil from school, or by subjecting them to any other detriment, on the grounds of protected characteristics.

Curriculum - Teaching and school materials

Efforts are made to recognise and be aware of the possibility of bias so that this can be eliminated in both teaching and learning materials and teaching styles. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum so as to avoid stereotypes and bias.

Pupil interaction

All pupils are encouraged to work with and have respect for all other pupils, irrespective of their protected characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered towards all groups in society through the curriculum, the ethos of the schools, and the vision and values of the Trust.

Bullying

The Trust has an Anti-bullying policy in place and each school has localised procedures. Bullying is not tolerated.

Types of bullying could include:

- Bullying relating to race, religion, belief or culture
- Bullying related to special educational needs and disabilities
- Bullying related to appearance or health conditions
- Bullying relating to sexual orientation
- Bullying of young carers or looked after children or otherwise related to home circumstances
- Sexist or sexual bullying

School Uniform

Each school's Uniform Policy is consistent with this policy. The same school Uniform Policy applies equally to all pupils, irrespective of their gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or special educational needs and disabilities, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Reasonable requests to alter the school uniform will be considered. The pupil or his or her parents should refer the matter to the Headteacher to ensure reasonable adjustments are suitably made to accommodate the pupil. This is subject to considerations of safety and welfare and the school's existing school Uniform Policy principles.

Pupils with SEND

The Trust publishes a SEND Policy which details the inclusive educational provision for pupils with SEND.

Employment

This policy applies to all aspects of employment from the advertisement of jobs, recruitment, terms and conditions of employment, career development, appraisal, training, grievance and disciplinary procedures, through to reasons for termination of employment.

Dignity at Work

The Trust publishes a Dignity at Work Policy which provides a framework for respect and good conduct. The policy is in place to support and sustain a positive working environment

for all, free from any form of inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour and making it clear that discrimination and harassment are unacceptable, and that all members of the Trust community have a role to play in creating a thriving environment for everyone.

Applicants

The Trust accepts applications from all and recruits staff irrespective of their protected characteristics. The Trust will not discriminate on any grounds in the terms on which a position is offered.

The Trust's Safer Recruitment Policy reflects its approach towards equal opportunities and is consistent with this policy.

Equal access - staff

The Trust ensures all staff have equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, and opportunities for development, irrespective of their protected characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and welfare.

Disabilities and reasonable adjustments

The Trust has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for individuals with a disability in respect of both employment and the education and associated services provided to ensure that such pupils and staff are not placed at any substantial disadvantage in comparison with other pupils and staff.

Reasonable adjustments may typically include:

- Making arrangements for an individual in a wheelchair to attend an interview in an accessible ground floor room
- Rearranging the timetable to allow a pupil to attend a class in an accessible part of the building
- Arranging a variety of accessible sports activities.

Staff Conduct & Expectations

The expectations for staff conduct are set out in the Staff Code of Conduct. This is to supplement an employee's terms and conditions of employment.

Access

The Trust and schools monitor the physical features of the premises to consider whether users of the premises who have a disability are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and proportionate, the Trust and its schools will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises. Each school has an Accessibility Plan which details this.

Responsibilities - Trust & Schools

The Vale Academy Trust is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and provider of education. The Trust opposes unlawful discrimination.

In the provision of equal opportunities, the Trust recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, which includes:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

All members of the Trust and each school community are expected to comply with this policy and to treat others with dignity and respect at all times.

The Trust ensures that each of the Trust schools publish their own PSED - Equality information and objectives.

The Headteachers in schools have delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its accessibility, availability, maintenance and review.

Those working at a senior leadership level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of the Trust with regard to equal opportunities in light of the Public Sector Equality Duty. A further responsibility is to ensure that appropriate arrangements to monitor the performance of potentially disadvantaged individuals are in place.

The EDI champions group - comprising Trust Headteachers, Director for Pupil Inclusion & Wellbeing and a Board Director – monitors the progression of the goals & measures and the Trust's EDI action plan. It offers support to schools regarding setting of appropriate objectives and can support schools to ensure EDI remains live and embedded within Trust settings. The Board Director is a link role to the Trust Board.

Reporting and recording incidents of discrimination

If you believe that anyone (adult or pupil) has received less favourable treatment on any of the unlawful grounds listed above, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to your detriment, you are encouraged to contact the Headteacher or at Trust Level, the Director for Pupil Inclusion and Wellbeing.

The Trust will take seriously and investigate every complaint and report. Disciplinary action may be taken against any member of the Trust/school who is found to have acted in contravention of this policy. The Trust's Complaints policy is available on the Vale Academy Trust website.

Expectations of Third Parties

The Vale Academy Trust embraces its legal duty and will only work with third parties who also ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against any person on any ground listed under the protected characteristics.

Specific Duties

The specific duties require schools:

- To publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- To prepare and publish equality objectives

Schools need to update their published information at least annually and to publish equality objectives at least once every four years.

Schools are also required to produce an accessibility plan.

APPENDIX A - Striving to be beyond compliant.



Equality Goals and Measures 2022 - 2026

The Equality Act 2010 sets out that all public bodies will publish equalities objectives every four years. Trust schools adhere to this through completion of the Equality Information and Objectives Document. The following goals and measures identify areas the Vale Academy Trust has chosen to focus on to improve and embrace equality, diversity and inclusion beyond compliance.

As mentioned, this appendix outlines future development for the Trust as a whole. These goals & measures are not a statutory obligation, as this compliance is achieved through schools completing the Equality Information and Objectives Document. However, within the Vale Academy Trust we strive to be beyond compliant so have set ourselves the following goals.

These goals and measures were derived within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group. Working through an in-house EDI action plan, progress towards these stated goals will be monitored three times per academic year by the EDI champion group.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Goals & Measures

Goal 1

To demonstrate our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and further embedding a Trust culture of EDI, through consistent application of our policies and procedures.

Actions/Measures

- Ensure that our systems for recruiting potential applicants support all those in groups protected by the Equalities Act and focus on attracting the best talent for the role
- Minimise potential sources of bias, such as more diverse recruitment panels.
- Ensure published information e.g job advertisements reflect an embedded culture of EDI at Trust level and beyond within the Vale Academy Trust Community

- Through our EDI culture, empower staff to feel confident to declare information on protected characteristics
- Establish an EDI champion group as a support mechanism for school leaders
- Ensure policies designed to support and protect our staff and pupils are clear, such as Dignity at Work and Anti-bullying.
- Establish a working group to focus on creating an internal reference document to support gender identity
- Continue monitoring and take action to narrow the gender pay gap
- Refine website information to include recruitment and advertising materials that embrace an EDI culture
- Support schools to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the PSED. This information must include, in particular, information relating to people who share a protected characteristic
- Support for schools to set PSED objectives
- Collaboration between leaders (EDI sub group) to set/review equality objectives

Goal 2

To promote the implementation of strong EDI practice in Trust schools to ensure opportunities for all

Actions/Measures:

- Establish an EDI champion group as a support mechanism for school leaders
- Promote/provide training for school leaders on EDI issues.
- An inclusive, broad and balanced curriculum is embedded within each Vale Academy Trust school
- Schools to produce an awareness calendar of key events with regard to EDI
- Parent voice, pupil voice, staff voice surveys to ensure inclusion of all
- Pupil Parliament projects with an EDI focus
- Curriculum will include an element of PHSE/RSE education at age appropriate level, which tackles stereotypes and challenges pupils' perceptions
- Encourage a diverse workforce, reflective of our communities

Goal 3

To promote understanding between different groups of people, cultures and societies.

Actions/Measures:

- Education around protected characteristics to further aid understanding/awareness of all staff and pupils
- Maintain a rigorous approach to anti-bullying so that all pupils and staff, including those with protected characteristics, are protected from harassment and discrimination.
- Create and roll out an EDI training package for all staff so they better understand and meet the needs of colleagues, pupils, parents and carers with protected characteristics
- Establish a gender identity working group who will create an internal, supporting guidance document
- Behaviour policies and procedures (including Anti-Bullying and associated policies) outline how any discriminatory issues, including those relating to protected characteristics, are addressed (zero tolerance)