



HCAT

Equality Policy and

Objectives

2023-2026

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Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
1	Original	Feb 2023
2	Rebranded	June 2024

HCAT Equality Policy and Objectives

1. Introduction

HCAT welcomes its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Prevent Duty guidance 2015 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations and positive attitudes in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Our Equality Policy provides a framework for us to pursue these duties and ensure that no person, through their contact with the Trust, receives less favourable treatment. The principles apply to all members of the extended community – students, staff, governors, trustees, parents, carers and members of the local community.

Across our Trust, the diversity of our staff, our children and our communities is respected, appreciated, valued and celebrated. Equality of opportunity is embedded in both Trust and school policies and practices.

We are determined to ensure that our staff, governors, and Trustees are of diverse backgrounds, representing and reflecting our communities.

This policy outlines the commitment of the staff, governors, and Trustees of HCAT to promote and celebrate diversity, equality and inclusion.

Our schools respect, value and celebrate diversity within our communities. We recognize that we are all different; the contributions of all our adults and children are seen, heard, and valued. We enjoy our differences and take time to understand our varied experiences. We encourage one another to challenge our own assumptions.

We will tackle the barriers which could lead to unequal outcomes and ensure equality of access for all stakeholders. We will treat people fairly and consistently. We will treat any allegations of discrimination seriously.

Every adult and every child in HCAT is equally important to us. We recognize that we are all different.

2. Policy Commitments

HCAT Schools contribute towards celebrating diversity and promoting equality in the following ways:

Curriculum and school environment

We aim to provide all our pupils with the opportunity to succeed. To achieve this we will ensure:

- Curriculum planning embraces our commitments to diversity and equality;
- Our curriculum celebrates that our pupils live in a diverse and global society and uses opportunities to reflect the background and lived experience of pupils and families in the schools and community;
- There will be opportunities in the curriculum to explore concepts and issues related to identity and equality;
- The promotion of attitudes and values that celebrate and respect diversity;
- We always challenge discriminatory behaviour and language wherever it occurs;
- We use images and materials which showcase a broad range of cultures, identities and lifestyles;
- Our books for children include texts written by diverse authors who celebrate and embrace difference;
- Resources for children in school enable them to create art works in their own image;
- We regularly ask whether our pupils can see themselves reflected in our curriculum content;
- Displays around our schools celebrate our own diversity and champion the achievements of people of all backgrounds. These displays are frequently monitored and extended.

Attainment and Achievement

There is a consistently high expectation of all pupils regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. To secure the best possible outcomes we recognize that:

- Adults in the schools must provide strong, positive role models in their approach to all issues relating to equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity;
- Our schools' policy and practice ensures that education within the schools meets the specific needs of each pupil and all learners are actively encouraged to engage fully in their own learning;
- It is important to identify the particular needs of individuals and groups within the school and to use targeted interventions to narrow gaps in attainment. Progress meetings monitor gender, ethnicity, English as an Additional Language (EAL), Pupil Premium and Special Educational Needs to ensure there are no patterns or specific cases of under-attainment. If there are, appropriate action is taken.

Ethos, engagement and inclusion

In our schools, equality of opportunity is embedded into school practice;

- Parents, carers and children are encouraged to contact an appropriate member of staff to discuss any concerns;
- The children are encouraged to behave well to each other and the people they come into contact with, as part of our schools' 'Behaviour Expectations';
- Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure access for pupils, staff and visitors (including parents) with disabilities (this not only includes physical access, but takes account wider access to school information and activities);
- Provision is made to cater for the cultural, moral and spiritual needs of all children through planning of assemblies, classroom based and off-site activities;
- Pupils' views are actively encouraged and respected. Pupil voices are heard: for example through school councils, which reflect the school population; and through pupil surveys and regular opportunities to engage about their learning and the life of the school;
- Positive role models are used throughout the school to ensure that all pupils feel welcomed and included.

Staff Recruitment and Professional Development

- All posts are advertised formally, either across the Trust or nationally;
- All those involved in recruitment and selection are trained and aware of what they should do to avoid discrimination including unconscious bias;
- Recruitment and progression decisions are made on merit;
- Steps are taken to encourage people from under-represented groups to apply for positions at all levels of the school;
- Any complaints of bullying, harassment or discrimination are taken seriously and are referred to the Headteacher or CEO;
- Acts of bullying, harassment or discrimination will be dealt with under the Trust's grievance and/ or disciplinary procedure and appropriate action will be taken;
- Opportunities for training, development and progression are available to all staff and we will help and encourage all staff to develop their full potential;
- Access to opportunities for professional development is monitored on equality grounds;
- This policy is promoted in all staff inductions;
- Employment policy and procedures are reviewed regularly to check conformity with legislation and the impact of policies are kept under regular review.

Countering and Challenging Harassment and Bullying

- Our schools counter and challenge all types of discriminatory behaviour and this is made clear to staff, pupils, parents, governors and Trustees;

- Our schools have a clear, agreed procedure for dealing with prejudice related bullying incidents and the who is responsible for recording and monitoring incidents;
- Our schools report to local governing bodies on an annual basis the number of prejudice related incidents recorded in the school.

Partnerships with Parents/Carers and the Wider Community

- Our Schools aim to work in partnership with parents/carers. We:
- Take action to ensure all parents/carers are encouraged to participate in the life of the school;
- Maintain good channels of communication, e.g. through regular parental contact and consultation, ensuring parents' views are captured to inform practice;
- Encourage members of the local community to join in school activities and celebrations;
- Ensure that the parents/carers of all newly arrived pupils are made to feel welcome.
- Organise visits to the school from the parent and wider community (e.g. fire and community police officers);
- Organise local visits for the children;
- Carry out fundraising activities.

3. Our Equality Objectives

Every year our schools set their equality objectives. Our Trust Equality Objectives for 2023-2026 are:

- To strengthen the Academy curriculums across the Trust to ensure effective teaching of equality and diversity
- Lessen the achievement and attendance differences of disadvantaged pupils in the Trust
- Encourage inclusive leadership at all levels across the Trust, to allow for a diversity of understanding and experience to advance our inclusive culture.

4. Responsibility for the Policy

In our schools, all members of the school community have a responsibility for promoting equalities.

The local committees have responsibility for ensuring that:

- The school has equality objectives within its school development plan;
- The school is making good progress towards meeting its equality objectives;
- The school complies with all equalities legislation relevant to the school community;
- They scrutinise information about discriminatory incidents and ask questions about action taken;
- They always champion diversity, equality and fairness and regularly ask challenging questions in support of this policy.

The Trustees have responsibility for ensuring that:

- The trust has in place robust policies for staff and for children which advance equality of opportunity and fair treatment of all.

The Principal / Headteachers/ Heads of School and Senior Leadership teams have responsibility for:

- Providing active leadership and vision in respect of celebrating diversity and promoting equality in partnership with the governing body;
- Proposing, leading and reviewing progress against equality objectives;
- Recording, taking appropriate action and reporting (to governing body) any discriminatory incidents;
- Ensuring that staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given relevant training and support.

All school staff have responsibility for:

- Modelling good practice, dealing with racist or other discriminatory incidents and being able to recognize and tackle bias and stereotyping;

- Celebrating diversity, promoting equality and inclusion and avoiding discrimination against anyone for reasons of race, ethnic or national origins, language, culture, religion or belief, disability, gender, sexual orientation or social class;
- Keeping up to date with the law on discrimination and taking training and learning opportunities.

5. Monitoring and Review

The schools' leadership teams are responsible for co-ordinating the monitoring and evaluation of this policy.

This includes: Supporting positively the evaluation activities that monitor the impact and success of the policy on pupils from different groups, e.g. SEND, Looked After Children, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, including Traveller and EAL pupils, and Pupil Premium entitlement. This will be done through the monitoring of:

- Pupils' progress and attainment
- Policy and practice and classroom observations
- Behaviour, discipline and exclusion data
- Attendance
- Admissions
- Incidents of prejudice related bullying and all forms of bullying
- Parental involvement
- Participation in extra-curricular and extended school activities
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Visits and visitors

The trust will publish gender pay gap data and a supporting narrative on our website

Appendix 1 – Our Legal Duties

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).

Protected characteristics

The Act defines protected characteristics as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

These protected characteristics apply to pupils, prospective pupils, staff, prospective staff or anybody they are associated with, with the exception of 'age' and 'marriage and civil partnership' which do not apply to pupils and prospective pupils.

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

The Public Sector Equality Duty or 'general duty'

This requires all public organisations, including schools to give due regard to the need to (in relation to the protected characteristics above):

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
3. Foster good relations between different groups

Two 'specific duties'

This requires all public organisations, including schools to:

1. Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty
2. Publish Equality Objectives at least every 4 years which are specific and measurable

Unlawful behaviour

The Act defines four kinds of unlawful behaviour – direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; harassment and victimisation.

Direct discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably, because of a protected characteristic, than they treat – or would treat – other people.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a "provision, criterion or practice" is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic.

Harassment has a specific legal definition in the Act - it is "unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person".

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done ("a protected act") in connection with the Act.

Discrimination arising from disability - treating someone unfavourably because of something connected with their disability (such as periods of absence from work or medical conditions) and failure to make reasonable adjustments. The law on disability discrimination is different from the rest of the Act. In particular, it works in only one direction, i.e. it protects disabled people but not people who are not disabled. This means that we are allowed to treat disabled pupils more favourably than non-disabled pupils, and in some cases are required to do so, by making reasonable adjustments to put them on a more level footing with pupils without disabilities

Reasonable Adjustments and Accessibility Plans

HCAT is required to:

- Take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage caused by a provision, criteria or practice or a physical feature that puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to a non-disabled person. This involves removing or avoiding a physical feature, for example steps and lifts.
- Take reasonable steps to provide auxiliary aids/services
- Provide information in an accessible format.
- Develop and implement (by allocation of resources) Accessibility Plans which will;
 - Increase disabled pupils' access to the school curriculum

And for all users of the school

- Improve the physical environment
- Improve the provision of information

The duty is an anticipatory and continuing one that HCAT owes to all pupils with disabilities whether identified or not, and to those pupils who will be attending in the future. Our schools will seek relevant information regarding newly placed pupils to ensure as far as possible that their needs are anticipated under this Act. We will ensure that we work closely with professionals, parents and carers as appropriate to identify the challenges presented to us by new pupils under this Act.

Community Cohesion

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to the Education Act 2002, introducing a duty, applicable to the Trust, to promote community cohesion. Community cohesion encompasses promoting good relations between pupils from different races, faith/beliefs and socioeconomic backgrounds. HCAT policies and activities should all be promoting community cohesion and inclusion wherever possible to comply with, and support these duties.