

Vermont School's Equality Policy

Author	Head of School
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Introduction

We welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010 as both a provider of education and as an employer.

We believe that all pupils and members of staff should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential whatever their background, identity and circumstances. We are committed to creating a community that recognises and celebrates difference within a culture of respect and co-operation. We appreciate that a culture which promotes equality will create a positive environment and a shared sense of belonging for all who work, learn and use the services of our school. We recognise that equality will only be achieved by the whole school community working together – our pupils, staff, governors and parents/carers.

This document outlines the principles which will guide our approach to working with our school community and enabling an open culture.

National and Legal Context

We recognise that we have duties under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the school community to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in relation to age (applicable only to staff), disability, ethnicity, gender (including issues of transgender, maternity and pregnancy), religion and belief, sexual orientation and marital status (applicable

only to staff).

We also recognise that we have a duty under the Education & Inspections Act 2006 to promote community cohesion by developing good relations across different cultures and groups.

We also appreciate that these duties reflect the international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Guiding principles

At Vermont School our Equalities policy and practice is guided by five key principles:

Principle 1: All learners are of equal value

We see all learners and potential learners, and their parents and carers, as of equal value.

- whether or not they are disabled or require SEND provision
- whatever their ethnicity, culture or race
- whatever languages they may speak
- whether or not they are seeking sanctuary
- whatever their sex or gender identity
- whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background
- whatever their sexual orientation.

Principle 2: We celebrate diversity, and recognise and respect difference.

Through our school values, ethos, systems and structures, we aim to celebrate the diverse nature of our school community. We recognise that treating people equally (Principle 1 above) does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

- disability or SEND; so that reasonable adjustments are made
- ethnicity, language and race; so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised
- sex and gender; so that the different experiences of all, including transgender and non-binary individuals, are recognised
- religion, belief or faith background
- sexual orientation.

Principle 3: We foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging.

We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- positive attitudes towards people who have a disability or SEND requirement, good relations between those who have a disability or SEND requirement and those who do not, and an absence of harassment in this area.
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious belief, sanctuary status, language spoken and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents
- mutual respect and good relations between all sexual orientations, sexes and gender identities, and an absence of sexual, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic harassment

Principle 4: We observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development.

We ensure that policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whatever their age
- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious belief, sanctuary status and language spoken
- whatever their sex, gender identity or sexual orientation
- with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy, marital status and maternity, paternity and adoption.

Principle 5: We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist.

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist because of disability, SEND requirement, race and ethnicity, language spoken, religious belief, cultural background, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, sanctuary status or socio-economic background.

Equality Objectives

In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, Vermont School publishes specific Equality Objectives which are reviewed annually by leaders and governors and updated at least every four years.

These objectives reflect the school's commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations within our school community.

The current Equality Objectives are:

- Improve emotional regulation and engagement in learning for pupils with SEMH needs through targeted interventions and consistent trauma-informed practice.
- Reduce attendance gaps for vulnerable pupils by strengthening family support and personalised attendance plans.
- Increase parental engagement for families experiencing disadvantage by offering flexible communication and support opportunities.

The Equality Objectives are published on the school website and are monitored through school improvement processes, governor oversight and ongoing evaluation of pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

The curriculum

We keep each curriculum subject or area under review in order to ensure that teaching and learning reflect the principles set out above.

Ethos and organisation

We ensure the principles listed above apply to the full range of our policies and practices, including those that are concerned with:

- pupils' progress, attainment and achievement
- pupils' personal development, welfare and well-being
- teaching styles and strategies
- admissions and attendance
- staff recruitment, retention and professional development
- care, guidance and support

- behaviour, discipline and exclusions
- working in partnership with parents, carers and guardians
- working with the wider community.
- addressing prejudice and prejudice-related bullying

Address prejudice and prejudice related bullying:

The school is opposed to all forms of prejudice, which stand in the way of fulfilling the legal duties outlined in the Equalities Act. This includes:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- prejudices around racism and xenophobia, including those that are directed towards religious groups and communities, for example antisemitism and Islamophobia, and those that are directed against travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum
- prejudices reflecting sexism, homophobia, biophobia and transphobia.

There is guidance in the staff handbook on how prejudice-related incidents should be identified, assessed, recorded and dealt with.

We keep a record of prejudice-related incidents and, if requested, provide a report to the local authority about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our school and how they are dealt with.

Roles and responsibilities:

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented.

The headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; 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.

All staff are expected to:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- deal with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
- plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the principles above
- support pupils in their class who are new to English
- keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

Religious observance:

We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

Provision for students with disabilities:

Under the Equality Act, schools have a responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and to protect against discrimination. Alongside the LA, we have a duty to assess accessibility and provide adjustments as required. This may include providing auxiliary aids such as specific furniture or specialised equipment. We work closely with Occupational Health to make any assessments. We work closely with pupils and parents to ensure that pupils are able to access the curriculum to the best of their ability.

Staff development and training:

We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Breaches of the policy:

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the headteacher and governing body.

Monitoring and review:

We will collect, study and use quantitative and qualitative data relating to the implementation of this policy, and make adjustments as appropriate. In particular, we collect, analyse and use data in relation to achievement, broken down as appropriate according to disabilities and special educational needs, ethnicity, culture, language, religious affiliation, national origin, sanctuary status, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity.