



THE PRIORY  
LEARNING TRUST

# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) and Accessibility Policy

Approved and Authorised for use by the Trust Board 18th July 2023

## History of Policy Changes

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Origin of Change e.g. TU request, change in legislation</b>	<b>Changed by</b>
May 2021	1	Merger of Equality Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Accessibility Policy	Annual review	Sarah Gibbon
July 2022	1.1		Annual review	DL & HB
June 2023	1.2		Annual review	EDI Working Group

This policy applies to The Priory Learning Trust and all its schools.

Date policy adopted	September 2022
Review cycle	Annual
Review date	September 2024

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## 1. Our commitment

The Priory Learning Trust (the Trust) is committed to the vision of Students First, Cherishing Staff and Serving Communities. As an educational establishment, we are well positioned to educate not only our pupils, but our staff and the communities we serve. It is our aspiration to build a culture where difference is valued, understood and respected. We will challenge prejudice and intolerance, and seek to eliminate discrimination and ensure that all will receive equal treatment regardless of any protected characteristic.

This policy applies to all staff and students of The Priory Learning Trust.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is in the best interests of our staff, job applicants, students and the wider community. It is also in the best interest of the Trust, so that we recruit and develop the best people for our jobs, generate the strongest outcomes for our students and all can benefit from the diversity and inclusion it brings.

The Trust recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination. Discrimination is acting unfairly against a group or individual and can be direct or indirect. All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and Equality Duty, the Trust will strive to ensure that it considers the needs of all individuals and avoids discrimination in shaping our policies, delivering our services and in relation to our employees and students.

By understanding the effect of our policies and actions on different people and how inclusive services can give everyone opportunities, we are able to ensure our services are efficient and effective.

The Trust aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity, equality, diversity and inclusion, and that enables and encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

## 2. Legal duties

The Equality Act 2010 provides a single legal framework with three broad duties:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
- 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 share it.

The effect of the Equality Duty is that schools must have due regard to the above in relation to the management of their pay policy and avoid direct or indirect discrimination. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to prepare and publish equality objectives and publish information, to demonstrate compliance with the general duty - the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

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

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Special Educational Needs Regulations 2014.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Equality Act 2010.
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

The Equality Duty covers the following 'protected characteristics':

- Age
- Disability
- Race, including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Gender reassignment
- Maternity and pregnancy
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Religion and belief, including lack of belief
- Sex, including gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Duty requires the Trust as a public body to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In complying with the Equality Duty it may be appropriate to treat some people differently from others, for example providing a particular service in a way that meets the specific needs of people who share a protected characteristic.

Specific objectives will be set and monitored to help the Trust and its schools to meet its duties and the aims of this policy. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for its implementation in respect of the Trust and will work with the Principals to ensure the successful implementation and operation in our education settings. This may require training on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Data related to the protected characteristics of staff will be collected and analysed by HR, and for students by the Data Manager, to monitor compliance with the Equality Duties which will be done in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. This will include information on admissions, attendance, attainment, exclusions and prejudice-related incidents. Published information will not identify any individual.

The Trust and each individual school has their own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan to actively advance equality of opportunity and prepare pupils to embrace a life in a diverse society. We also want to deliver equality and diversity through our Trust and school policies, procedures, training and practice. We will monitor the implementation of the EDI Action Plans to ensure our policies and procedures are fair, transparent and in line with our culture and ethos as well as our

legal and statutory responsibilities. We want to ensure our decisions, behaviours and actions align with our values.

### **3. Discrimination**

Incidents involving discrimination and prejudice will be tackled immediately in line with this, and other Trust and school policies; legal support may be sought if appropriate. There are many forms of discrimination: Direct; Indirect; Harassment, including sexual harassment; Victimisation or Disability Discrimination.

The Act makes it unlawful for a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a student or potential student:

- in relation to admissions;
- in the way it provides education for student;
- in the way it provides student access to any benefit, facility or service;
- by excluding a student or subjecting them to any other detriment.

All employees of the Trust have a duty to co-operate with the Trust to ensure that this policy is effective. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts or when wearing a work uniform) and on work-related trips or events including social events. The Trust and its schools will promote this policy and ask anyone to report instances of suspected discriminatory behaviour so that they can be dealt with.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it implicit that it is illegal to treat an employee less favourably or unfairly based on a personal characteristic. It outlines 6 different types of discrimination a person can be subjected to in the workplace; harassment, victimisation, indirect, direct, associated or perceived discrimination.

### **4. Disabilities**

The needs of disabled people must be taken into account in terms of employment and service delivery, and it may be appropriate to make reasonable adjustments or treat disabled people more favourably than non-disabled people.

If you are disabled or become disabled, you are encouraged to tell the Trust about your condition so that should support be required, this can be explored.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your Line Manager in the first instance, who with the support of the HR Team will discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. The HR Team may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser/occupational health about possible adjustments. The Trust will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If the Trust consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, the Trust will explain the reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

The Trust will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, the Trust will take reasonable steps to improve access.

### **5. Accessibility**

The Trust has a duty to increase access to education for disabled students and make reasonable adjustments for staff:

- increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the school curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled students can take advantage of education, benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school;
- improving the delivery to disabled students of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled;
- review and implement reasonable adjustments for staff.
- The Trust is a committed employer currently at level 1 of the disability confident scheme, demonstrating its dedication towards disability inclusivity.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice 2015 place further duties on schools so that, in addition to ensuring access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all, schools must raise the aspirations of children and young people with SEN and Disabilities through an increased focus on life outcomes, including employment and greater independence.

Each school will produce an Accessibility Plan which will promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. Schools are required to resource, implement and review their Accessibility Plan annually and in addition as necessary. It will be monitored and evaluated by the Academy Council.

## 6. Responsibilities of the Trust

**The Trust Board** is responsible for approving this policy and ensuring it is applied fairly and consistently across the Trust. The Board will ensure that the Trust's published equality information is updated at least every year, and that the objectives are reviewed and updated at least every 4 years. The Trust Board monitors the achievement of the objectives and their impact in our schools.

The Trust has a link Trustee for equality and diversity, who will meet with the designated member of staff for equality each term, to discuss any issues and how these are being addressed. The link Trustee will ensure they're familiar with all relevant legislation and the contents of this policy, and they will attend appropriate equality and diversity training and report back to the Trust Board regarding any issues or updates.

**The CEO** is responsible for ensuring that all stakeholders adhere to this policy. They will ensure that suspected breaches are investigated and breaches are managed swiftly, effectively, fairly and consistently.

**HR** is responsible for ensuring that all employees are aware of this policy and associated procedures. The team will also ensure that this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.

**Leaders and managers** must ensure they implement this policy fairly and equitably, seeking guidance, clarification and support as and when required. Each school in the Trust will prepare and publish an Accessibility Plan and EDI action plan that will aim

to meet the needs of disabled students by increasing the extent to which they can participate in the curriculum; improving the physical environment of; and improving the availability of accessible information.

**All employees** must promote equality and diversity, and they must actively respond to any incidents of unfair discrimination related to protected characteristics perpetuated by pupils, staff or visitors. If employees have queries or concerns, they may wish to speak to their line manager or HR for further advice and guidance.

**Academy Councils and Principals** are responsible for monitoring the application of this policy within their respective schools, providing a high-profile lead on equality, diversity and inclusion, advancing equality and diversity inside and outside school.

**Students** are responsible for respecting others in their language, behaviours and actions and they must adhere to our equality and diversity policies, procedures and practices.

The Trust considers equality, diversity and inclusion in its decision-making, and schools always consider the impact of significant decisions on particular groups. For example, when a school trip or activity is being planned, leaders considers whether the trip:

- Cuts across any religious holidays
- Is accessible to pupils with disabilities
- Has equivalent facilities for all

The school keeps a written record of equality impact assessments to show we have actively considered our equality duties and asked ourselves relevant questions. This is recorded at the same time as the risk assessment when planning school trips and activities. The record is completed by the member of staff organising the activity and is stored electronically with the completed risk assessment.

## 7. Breaches of this policy

The Trust take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

If you believe that you have suffered discrimination you can raise the matter through the Trust Grievance Procedure or Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

You must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.

## 8. Equality impact statement

We will do all we can to ensure that this policy does not discriminate, directly or indirectly. We shall do this through regular monitoring and evaluation of our policies. On review we shall assess and consult relevant stakeholders on the likely impact of



our policies on the promotion of all aspects of equality, as laid down in the Equality Act (2010). This will include, but not necessarily be limited to: race; gender; sexual orientation; disability; ethnicity; religion; cultural beliefs and pregnancy/maternity.

## **9. Review of this policy**

This policy is reviewed annually by the Trust and where materially amended is consulted on, where necessary. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

## 10. Appendix 1 – Equality Objectives 2021-2023

The Trust has adopted the Equality Objectives listed below. Progress on achieving these will be reported on annually, using information from the Trust and from each school.

1. Promote a whole school approach to staff and student health and mental well-being and develop appropriate intervention where necessary.
2. Ensure staff, Governors and Trustees are aware of current legislation surrounding equality and diversity and understand each school's and the Trust's responsibilities and receive annual training to promote this awareness.
3. Promote equality, diversity and inclusion across our staff body during recruitment, selection or promotion processes. This will be achieved in several ways, including promoting flexible working, transparency in the gender pay gap and training for staff to eliminate any unconscious bias in recruitment.
4. Ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all students, regardless of ability or disability. This includes physical aspects of the school environment and differentiation in teaching and learning in the classroom.
5. Actively close the gaps in attainment and progress for all vulnerable groups of children, especially gaps between boys and girls, students eligible for Pupil Premium, students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Looked after children and children from minority groups

## 11. Appendix 2 – Suggested reading

Boys do cry: Improving Boys' Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools – Matt Pinkett

Overview of the Equality Act 2010 - <https://www.eoc.org.uk/the-equality-act/>