

'They will soar on wings like eagles ...'
Isaiah 40:31

collaborate | enrich | trust | innovate | aspire | nurture



Multi-Academy Trust Policy

Equalities Statement and Objectives

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V2	31.7.25	AW	Updates in line with legislation changes. 2023-24 target review removed 2024-25 targets reviewed 2025-26 new targets

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Introduction

Through inclusive and innovative practice, we nurture the Aquila family to provide exceptional learning experiences, enriching the lives of all in our unique communities. We aspire to excellence and this statement has been written to reflect our core values but specifically “Enrich, Trust and Aspire”

“So, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 7:12

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), part of the Equality Act, came into force in April 2011. It requires organisations to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.

The duty has a key role to play in making sure that fairness is at the heart of public bodies’ work and that public services meet the needs of different groups. It covers a range of public bodies, including academies, schools, NHS organisations, government departments, local authorities, and police authorities.

The duty replaces the previous requirements covering race, disability and gender equality and now extends to cover age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment. Marriage and civil partnership are also covered, but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination.

This document meets the requirements under the following legislation:

- [The Equality Act 2010](#), which introduced the public sector equality duty and protects people from discrimination
- [The Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) Regulations 2011](#), which require schools to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the public sector equality duty and to publish equality objectives at least once every four years.

Statutory DfE guidance (2024), including:

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (statutory from August 2024), which embeds equality of opportunity through targeted support for pupils with SEND and from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Revised Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Guidance (2024–2025), setting age-appropriate content thresholds and emphasising the safeguarding needs of children in curriculum planning;
- Guidance for Schools on Gender-Questioning Pupils (2024 consultation; updated 2025), highlighting legal expectations to approach gender identity teaching through the lens of biological sex and ensuring cautious, lawful practice without promoting social transition.

This document is also based on the [Department for Education \(DfE\) advice for schools on the Equality Act](#), the [technical guidance for schools from the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) and [guidance from the Government Equalities Office on meeting the specific duties that support the public sector equality duty](#).

This document also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 puts various requirements on academies when exercising their functions. The general duty requires academies to have due regard to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

“Due regard” involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- meeting the needs of people with protected characteristics;
- encouraging participation in public life or activities where participation is disproportionately low.

Fostering good relations includes tackling prejudice and promoting understanding, both through curriculum content and through community and stakeholder engagement.

This consideration must inform decision-making, including:

- employment practices;
- policy development and review;
- curriculum planning and delivery;
- procurement and commissioning.

Equality Statement

Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust, ensures that equal opportunities and fairness underpin all policy, provision and decision-making. We adopt the aims of the PSED in every school and workplace across our Trust, ensuring high-quality and accessible education.

We actively seek the views of staff, students, families, and the wider community and respond to concerns and insights related to equality, ensuring our services reflect the communities we serve.

Where needed, reasonable adjustments and additional support will be made to ensure access to education and the workplace for all. Every individual—regardless of race, sex, gender reassignment, disability, age, sexual orientation, culture, religion, pregnancy or maternity—is treated fairly and respectfully.

This commitment is embedded through ongoing policy review, inclusive curriculum design, staff development, and the promotion of high standards of behaviour and respect.

Employment

The Trust, employing 710 staff, ensures all recruitment, development and HR practices are compliant with the Equality Act 2010. Our Staff Handbook includes policies covering:

- Equal opportunities;
- Dignity at work;
- Menopause;
- Family leave rights;
- Grievance and whistleblowing.

We acknowledge broader responsibilities—for example, towards employees caring for disabled dependents, and commit to making reasonable adjustments where applicable.

All recruitment processes are monitored for equality and reviewed regularly. Staff breaching equality standards will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Pupil Provisions

Across our schools, we serve 4,009 pupils. We recognise our duty to:

- Provide appropriate educational support and remove barriers to learning;
- Meet the reasonable adjustment duty, including provision of auxiliary aids and services for pupils with disabilities;
- Implement safeguarding, RSHE, behaviour, SEND, and curriculum policies that are sensitive to equality and legal developments.

In line with 2024–2025 DfE guidance:

- Our RSHE curriculum is taught according to age thresholds and with parental transparency, ensuring content is delivered safely and respectfully;
- Attendance policies, now subject to statutory guidance, are designed to support SEND and disadvantaged pupils and help reduce inequalities;
- Gender-related issues are approached cautiously, in accordance with government advice that emphasises lawful, safeguarding-led practices based on biological sex.

Contractors and Service Providers

Each school and the trust will ensure that all service providers that are contracted to provide services to students, staff or visitors will comply with Equalities legislation.

Where services are deemed not to meet Trust/School standards, concerning equal opportunities and fairness, contracts may be terminated.

Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the equality information and objectives as set out in this statement are published and communicated throughout each school, including to staff, pupils and parents
- Ensuring that the published equality information is updated at least every year and that the objectives are reviewed and updated at least every 4 years
- Delegating responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives on a day-to-day basis to the CEO and Central Team
- Ensuring they're familiar with all relevant legislation and the contents of this document
- Attending appropriate equality and diversity training

Local Governors are responsible for:

- Delegating responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives on a day-to-day basis to the headteacher
- Meeting with relevant staff members, to discuss any issues around Equality and how these are being addressed
- Ensuring they're familiar with all relevant legislation and the contents of this document
- Attending appropriate equality and diversity training

The Head Teacher/Executive Head is responsible for:

- Giving a consistent and high-profile lead on equality and diversity.
- Putting the Trust's equality and diversity policies into practice.
- Ensuring that all staff know their responsibilities and receive the support and training necessary to carry them out.
- Following the relevant procedures and acting in cases of unfair discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

All staff are responsible for:

- Promoting equality and diversity, and avoiding unfair discrimination.
- Actively responding to any incidents of unfair discrimination, related to protected characteristics perpetrated by students, other staff or visitors in line with trust policy.
- Keeping up to date with equality law and participating in equal opportunities and diversity training.
- Ensuring complaints from parents, students and the community are dealt with in line with the Trust's complaints procedure, and as such appropriate staff will deal with the relevant stage of the complaint.

Students are responsible for:

- Respecting others in their language and actions.
- Obeying all of the school equality and diversity policies.

Ongoing good practice

1. Each academy monitors and analyses pupil achievement and progress by ethnicity, sex and disability, and acts on any trends or patterns in this data that identify the need for additional support for pupils with the aim of narrowing the gap for vulnerable groups.

2. Each academy provides a secure environment in which all our children can flourish and achieve.
3. Each academy monitors their curriculum and ensures it is broad and balanced, and reflects the importance of equality and inclusivity.
4. Schools follow DfE's statutory attendance guidance (2024) to support all learners, particularly those facing barriers linked to disadvantage or disability.
5. RSHE delivery is aligned with new DfE thresholds (2024–25), including not teaching explicit content and delivering gender-related content consistent with current legal frameworks.
6. Equality objectives are published and reviewed every four years, in line with the Specific Duties Regulations and examples set by public bodies like Ofqual and HMRC.

Equality and diversity Objectives 2024/25- review

1. Administer new admissions criteria set so our schools reflect the makeup of their local communities, providing local schools for local families. Monitor the change in our school communities and adapt teaching resources and curriculum coverage to reflect these changes. Actively celebrate cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity through school events, assemblies, and extracurricular activities.
Our revised admissions criteria have been successfully implemented across all schools. The demographic makeup of our pupil population increasingly reflects the diversity of the local communities we serve. Collective worship, assemblies, and school events regularly celebrate a wide range of cultural, religious, and linguistic traditions, fostering inclusion and belonging.
2. Monitor the impact of the Lead SENCo in leading SEN developments to close the gap for pupils with SEN.
The Lead SENCo role has strengthened SEN provision Trust-wide. Monitoring indicates improved consistency in practice and a narrowing of attainment gaps for pupils with SEND. Schools report enhanced staff confidence and increased use of graduated support, alongside improved outcomes for individual pupils.
3. Ensure refugee children are supported through trauma informed work, language development and a relevant curriculum which encourages sharing the breadth of different cultures within our schools.
Refugee pupils are receiving tailored support through trauma-informed practices, focused language development, and an inclusive curriculum. Schools are embedding opportunities for children to share and celebrate their cultural heritage, promoting mutual respect and enriching learning environments.
4. Foster an environment where all students feel safe, respected, and included by addressing bullying, discrimination, and any form of harassment. Complete a behaviour audit and action plan in every school to ensure no group of pupils or staff feel threatened or unsafe.
All schools have had a full behaviour audit completed. Action plans are in place to address identified issues, with a focus on ensuring that all pupils and staff feel safe and valued. Policies now clearly outline expectations and responses to incidents of bullying, discrimination, or harassment, with regular monitoring to maintain high standards.
5. Ensure that all school policies and procedures, including those related to discipline, attendance, and admissions, are fair and applied consistently to all students.

Behaviour, attendance, and admissions policies have been reviewed and training delivered to ensure consistent and fair application. Equity remains central to all procedures, and we continue to monitor for any disproportionate impact on specific pupil groups.

6. Ensure all school policies and procedures relating to employment, including HR and pay, are fair and applied consistently to all staff

All Trust employment policies—including recruitment, pay, and HR procedures—have been reviewed to ensure fairness and transparency. Consistency is monitored across schools, and our central HR function supports equitable decision-making in line with the Equality Act 2010.

7. Monitor the impact of the relational policy on behaviour and sanctions, including exclusions for vulnerable pupils.

The new relational behaviour policy has been embedded across schools. Early data shows improved relationships and a reduction in fixed-term exclusions, particularly for vulnerable pupils. Ongoing monitoring is in place to assess long-term impact and ensure inclusive behaviour management practices.

Equality and diversity Objectives 2025/26

1. Improve attendance among disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils by embedding equitable support strategies across all schools.

Linked to: DfE Statutory Attendance Guidance (2024)

Target: Reduce persistent absence rates among disadvantaged pupils by 10% across the Trust by July 2026 through early intervention, personalised support plans, and partnership with families.

2. Ensure RSHE delivery in primary schools is age-appropriate, inclusive, and respectful of different backgrounds and beliefs.

Linked to: DfE Revised RSHE Guidance (2024–25)

Target: By the end of 2025–26, all schools will have reviewed and updated RSHE curricula to meet revised statutory thresholds, with clear communication to parents and staff training completed in 100% of schools.

3. Increase the diversity of local governing bodies to better reflect the demographics of the school communities they serve.

Linked to: Governance & Leadership Equity

Target: By July 2026, all LGBs will audit their current makeup, identify gaps, and aim to recruit at least one additional governor from an underrepresented group per board, supported by inclusive recruitment practices.

4. Enhance accessibility and inclusion in the curriculum for pupils with SEND, with a focus on early identification and adaptive teaching.

Target: Baseline schools through SEND curriculum audits by April 2026. 100% schools to have planned actions from audits by July 2026. All schools to have had access to graduated response training. Progress measures through outcomes in 2026 and 2027.

5. Expand inclusive nursery provision to improve early access to high-quality education for all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Target: By July 2026, increase nursery places across the Trust by at least 15%, ensuring all new or expanded provisions include strategies for supporting children with SEND, EAL and those eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium. Early intervention and family support will be embedded from the onset.

Complaints

The Trust will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful (or potentially unlawful) discrimination. Any complaints will be investigated following the Trust's grievance or complaints policy, whichever is appropriate.