



Diversity, Equity, Equality & Inclusion Policy

Document Control

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Applicable to	Meridian Trust Schools
Committee:	Finance & Resources Committee
Consultation with JCNC:	Yes
Committee Approval Date:	
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Links to other policies	• Dignity at Work Policy • Recruitment Policy, Selection and Disclosure Policy • Flexible Working Policy • Flexible Retirement Policy • Parental Bereavement Policy • Special Leave of Absence Policy • Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure • Accessibility Plan • Anti-bullying Strategy • Behaviour Policy • Code of Conduct for Staff • Complaints Procedure • Disciplinary Policy • Grievance Procedure (internal document) • Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy • Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy • Responding to prejudice related incidents.
Statutory and regulatory framework	This policy has regard to the following and will be adjusted for any statutory change, alongside review cycle. • Equality Act 2010 • The Equality Act 2010 and Schools - Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities (May 2014)



	Gender Questioning Children – Non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England (draft for consultation – December 2023)
Links to Action plan to meet objectives	Action Plan to be completed at a local level, attached as Appendix.

Revisions

Version	Page/Para No.	Description of Change	Approved On
1	4.2	List of policies included	November 2012
1	Multiple	References to Governing body replaced with Meridian Trust	November 2012
1	Multiple	Named staff to contact within policy updated to read Z Paul and J Parris	November 2012
2	Multiple	Named staff removed and changed to 'designated member of SLT'	October 2013
3	Multiple	Annual Review	October 2014
4	Multiple	Annual Review and update with Inclusion as per best practice and CIPD recommendation	June 2020
7	Multiple	Annual Review - reformatting and rebranding	August 2022
8	Multiple	Annual Review: updated to include Gender questioning Guidance, Equity, new action plan, new format	August 2024

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I. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out how Meridian Trust will meet its obligation under the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for all employees with regards to Diversity, Equality, Equity and Inclusivity. The Trust is committed to creating a working environment where all employees are integrated and treated fairly and equally, whilst valuing the diverse differences of each individual and group. The Trust will not discriminate unfairly on the grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, social background, special educational needs, part time or fixed term employment. The Trust endeavors to create an environment in which pupils and staff give due respect to other people and their work or ideas.

1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the documents listed in table 1, available on the local schools and the trust website as appropriate: <https://www.meridiantrust.co.uk/key-information/policies/>

1.3 This policy applies to all schools in the trust.

1.4 This policy is available on the school and trust website.

1.5 Copies of the above policies are available on request as hard copies by parents/carers by email request hard copies, which can be made available in large print or other accessible format of required.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 The Trust recognises the benefits of having diverse school communities, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. The Trust is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and is committed to equality of opportunity for all members of the schools' communities.

2.2 The Trust aims to ensure that all policies, procedures and practices conform with the principle of

equal opportunities. The schools will tackle inappropriate attitudes and practices amongst pupils through staff leading by example, the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education programme, the supportive School culture and through the Trust policies.

- 2.3 The Trust is a committed equal opportunities employer and will take every possible step to ensure that employees are treated equally and fairly in respect of these matters. All policies, procedures and practices will conform with the principle of equal opportunities in terms of recruitment, selection, training, promotion, career development, discipline, redundancy and dismissal. Staff and applicants for employment shall not be disadvantaged by any policies or conditions of service which cannot be justified as necessary for operational purposes.

3. Statutory and regulatory framework

- 3.1 This policy has regard to the following:

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010 and Schools - Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities \(May 2014\)](#)
- [Gender Questioning Children – Non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England \(draft for consultation – December 2023\)](#)

4. Scope and responsibilities

- 4.1 All members of the Trust, Academy Council, Trustees are expected to comply with this policy and always treat others with dignity.
- 4.2 This policy also applies to the Trust employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, former employees, applicants for employment and individuals such as agency staff, consultants and volunteers who are not our employees.
- 4.3 All workers have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and therefore to always treat colleagues with dignity, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, whether junior or senior to them. In some situations, the Trust may be at risk of being held responsible for the acts of individual members of staff and therefore shall not tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour.
- 4.4 Each School has responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. The Trust ensure the accessibility, maintenance and review of the policy.
- 4.5 Those working at a management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of each School regarding equal opportunities.

5. Protected Characteristics

- 5.1 The Trust recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination based on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 i.e.
- Age
 - Disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership

- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

5.2 The Trust also opposes all bullying and unlawful discrimination on the basis that a person has a special educational need.

6. Forms of discrimination

6.1 Discrimination may be direct or indirect, arise from a disability and may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

6.2 Direct discrimination occurs when an individual is treated less favourably than another individual because of a protected characteristic. For example, rejecting an applicant of a particular race because it is considered they would not "fit in".

6.3 Direct discrimination also occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (other than pregnancy or maternity). For example, if a pupil is harassed or victimised because a sibling is disabled, this would be direct discrimination against that pupil.

6.4 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 sex 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.

6.5 Discrimination arising from disability occurs when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and the treatment cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. For example, where a pupil with cerebral palsy who is a wheelchair user is told they will be unable to attend an educational visit because there is no wheelchair access available and other options are not investigated.

6.6 Discrimination also includes victimisation (suffering a detriment because of action the employee has taken or may take to assert legal rights against discrimination or to assist a colleague in that regard (called a Protected Act) and harassment.

6.7 Different religions, cultures and private and family life: The Trust will make every effort to accommodate the requirements of different religions and cultures and respect individuals' right to private and family life, recognising that this may mean different domestic responsibilities. Please see the following for specific information on our approach to these issues:

- Recruitment Policy and guidelines
- Flexible Working Policy
- Flexible Retirement Policy
- Parental Bereavement Policy
- Special Leave of Absence Policy

7. Equal opportunities for pupils Special educational needs and disability

7.1 The Trust welcomes pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. The Trust maintains and drives a positive culture towards inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, in all activities of the Trust, and will not treat a pupil differently unless appropriate to their special need and / or their disability.

7.2 At present, the individual School's physical facilities for the disabled reflect the needs of the current cohort. Each School will do all that is reasonable to ensure that the school's curriculum, ethos, culture, policies and procedures are made accessible to children who have disabilities and comply with our legal and moral responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

8. Reasonable adjustments for those with a disability

8.1 The Equality Act 2010 states there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments if an individual is placed at a substantial disadvantage because of their disability compared with non-disabled individuals or individuals who do not share the disability. Substantial means more than minor or trivial.

8.2 Each School has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled pupils.

8.3 When providing educational services to a pupil, each of our School will fulfil its legal requirements to make reasonable adjustments to cater for a pupil's disability. Reasonable adjustments are changes made to ensure disabled pupils can participate in their education and enjoy the other facilities that the individual School provides.

8.4 Each School will inform the pupil and parents/carers of the reasonable adjustments that the individual School is legally required to make for that pupil, which may typically include:

- planning for a child in a wheelchair to attend an interview in an accessible ground floor room
- allowing extra time for pupils who fulfil the current JCQ access arrangement criteria
- providing examination papers in larger print where this fulfils the current JCQ guidelines
- 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

8.5 The School is not legally required to make major adjustments which include: physical alterations such as the provision of a stair-lift or new ground floor facilities, such as a new library.

8.6 Each School will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether disabled users of the premises are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and proportionate, the School will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises, as identified in the Accessibility Plan for the school.

8.7 The Equality Act 2010 requires all schools to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils as part of the duty to make "reasonable adjustments". Each School will carefully consider any proposals and will not unreasonably refuse any requests for such aids and services to be provided.



- 8.8 Each School has an Accessibility Plan in place, which aims to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum, improve the physical environment of the School to increase access to education by disabled pupils and improve the delivery of information to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with disabilities.

9. The Equality Act 2010

- 9.1 The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or prospective pupil:

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

9.2 Admissions

9.2.1 Applicants:

Each School accepts applications from, and admits pupils irrespective of race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, or special educational needs and will not discriminate on these grounds in the terms on which a place is offered. Each School will treat every application in a fair and open-minded way.

9.2.3 Admissions Policy:

The individual School's Admissions Policies reflects the Trust's approach towards equal opportunities and is consistent with this policy.

9.3 Education and associated services

9.3.1 Equal access:

Each individual School will afford all pupils equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects including all sports, irrespective of their gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare, and 'Reasonable adjustments for those with a disability.

9.3.2 Exclusions:

The individual schools will not discriminate against any pupil by excluding them from the School, or by subjecting them to any other detriment, on the grounds of gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, or regarding reasonable adjustments for those with a disability.

9.3.4 Teaching and School materials:

Efforts are made to recognise and be aware of the possibility of bias (for example, gender or racial), so that this can be eliminated in the trusts teaching and learning materials and teaching styles. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum to avoid stereotypes and bias.

9.3.5 Pupil interaction:

All pupils are encouraged to work and play freely with, and have respect for, all other pupils, irrespective of their gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief, pregnancy or maternity or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and

welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered towards all groups in society through the curriculum and ethos of each School, and pupils will be encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.

10. Bullying

The Trust will not tolerate bullying or cyberbullying for any reason. Specific types of bullying include:

- Bullying relating to race, religion, belief or culture
- Bullying related to special educational needs or 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

10.1 The Trust's Anti-bullying Policy contains more details about anti-bullying practices.

11. School uniform

11.1 Pupils are required to wear School uniform for the duration of time in each school.

11.2 The Principal will consider requests from parents/carers and pupils regarding variations to the uniform where necessary, for example, on religious grounds.

11.3 Certain items of jewellery, such as the Kara bangle worn by Sikhs, and certain items of headwear, such as headscarves, may be worn by pupils when doing so is based on manifesting religious or racial beliefs, or identity. This is subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn under this section, the issue must be referred by the parents/carers or pupils to the Principal, whose decision will be final, subject to the School's Complaints Procedure.

11.4 Reasonable adjustments may be required to the School uniform for disabled pupils who require them. Parents/carers or pupils should refer the matter to the Principal to ensure all reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate the pupil.

12. Religious beliefs

12.1 The Trust respects the right and freedom of individuals to worship in accordance with other

12.2 faiths, or no faith, subject always to their respecting the rights and freedoms of each School community as a whole and considerations of safety and welfare.

13. Pupils with English as an Additional Language

13.1 Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) are expected to be able to access the curriculum in English. Each School will consult with the pupil and the parents/carers as appropriate and advise parents if additional language support is required.

14. Provision for pupils with religious, dietary or cultural needs

14.1 Each School makes provision for pupils with specific needs as far as is reasonable. For example, absence is granted for religious observance and the catering department takes dietary

requirements into account as far as is reasonably possible.

15. Reporting and recording incidents of discrimination

- 15.1 If you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Principal.
- 15.2 If a parent/carer of a current registered pupil in a Trust School believes they or their child has received less favourable treatment based on one or more of the protected characteristics, or feel this policy has been breached in any way to their or their child's detriment they are encouraged to raise the matter through the School's Complaints Procedure a copy of which is available on the Trust website. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the Complaints Procedure.
- 15.3 If you would like to report a breach of this policy that does not constitute a complaint based on the protected characteristics, please contact the Principal.
- 15.4 The Trust will treat seriously and urgently investigate every complaint and report. Disciplinary action may be taken against any member of the Trust community who is found to have acted in contravention of this policy. Allegations of discriminatory behaviour on the part of pupils or staff will be dealt with under the relevant policy: Behaviour Policy for pupils, or the Staff Grievance or Staff Disciplinary procedures.
- 15.5 All reported breaches of this policy will be recorded in the Equal Opportunities log and this record will be reviewed by the Principal.

Equal opportunities for applicants for employment

16. Recruitment and selection

- 16.1 The Trust aims to ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic. Recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated based on their relevant merits and abilities and that sufficiently diverse sectors of the community are reached. Job selection criteria are reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.
The employer will strive to achieve a workforce which is representative of the area in which the school/college/academy is situated in terms of diversity and inclusive representation.

Equal opportunities for staff

17. Staff training and promotion and conditions of service

- 17.1 Staff training needs shall be identified through regular staff appraisals. All workers will be given an equal opportunity and access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation. All promotion decisions shall be made based on merit.
- 17.2 The Trust's conditions of service, benefits and facilities will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are available to all workers who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

18. Disabilities and reasonable adjustments

- 18.1 Staff are encouraged to inform their individual School if they are disabled or become disabled in the course of their employment with the school. This enables the individual School to support Staff as much as possible.

- 18.2** Staff may also wish to advise their Link Line Manager of any reasonable adjustments to working conditions or the duties of the job which staff consider to be necessary, or which would assist staff in the performance of their duties. The Link Line Manager may wish to consult with staff and with their medical adviser(s) about possible reasonable adjustments. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals, and they will be accommodated where possible and proportionate to the needs of the job. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for the individual School to accommodate the suggested adjustments, and the individual School will ensure that it provides staff with information as to the basis of the decision not to make any adjustments.
- 18.3** Each School shall monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether it places disabled users of the premises at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and proportionate, each School will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises.
- 19. Menopause and unfair treatment**
Menopause is not specifically covered by the Equality Act. Unfair treatment because of menopause can amount to discrimination on the grounds of age, and/or disability and/or sex. This in part depends on severity of symptoms. The Trust will ensure that they do not treat employees less favourably than others and will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments as required. The Trust must also ensure that employees experiencing the menopause are not indirectly discriminated against. For example, a requirement to wear a uniform made of uncomfortable, synthetic fabric could indirectly discriminate against an employee experiencing regular menopausal hot flushes on grounds of disability, sex and age.
- 20. Fixed-term employees**
20.1 The Trust will monitor its use of fixed-term employees and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. The Trust will, where relevant, monitor their progress within the Trust to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies. The Trust will also assess the proper use of fixed term contracts as opposed to permanent contracts of employment
- 21. Part-time employees**
21.1 The Trust will monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. The Trust will also ensure requests to alter working hours are considered appropriately under the Trust's Flexible Working policy.
- 22. Staff complaints**
Staff who believe they may have been disadvantaged on any of the protected characteristics are encouraged to raise the matter through the Trust's Grievance Procedure. Staff who believe they may have been harassed on any of the protected characteristics are encouraged to raise the matter through the Dignity at Work Policy. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. The Grievance procedure and Dignity at Work Policy are available on the Trust website.
- 23. False allegations**
23.1 These procedures apply during and after termination of employment. Workers who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False

allegations of a breach in this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy, available on the Trust's website.

24. Disciplinary action

24.1 If, after investigation, a member of staff is proven to have bullied or harassed any other worker on the grounds of sex, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, race, disability or age or otherwise acted in breach of this policy, that member of staff will be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases, such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Trust will always take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

25. Monitoring and review

25.1 The Trust will regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy, associated procedures and **action plan** to meet its objectives and report accordingly to trustees, academy council and JCNC. The Finance and Resources Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and for ensuring that the Trust discharges its duty under the Equality Act (2010), including obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. This includes ensuring that equality objectives are in place and reported on regularly. The Trust HR Director will provide strategic direction and overall guidance and advice on matters regarding equal opportunities and will be responsible for reviewing the policy and ensuring its compliance and update to policies.

At Academy level, **Principals will designate a named person, with an appropriate level of authority** to be responsible for equality including monitoring equality objectives and equal opportunities.

All managers have responsibility to:

- set an appropriate standard of behaviour
- lead by example
- ensure their team members adhere to the policy
- promote the aims and objectives of diversity, equity, equality and inclusivity.

Managers will be given appropriate training on equality and equal opportunities awareness and on best practice with regards to equality, diversity and being inclusive with regards to recruitment and selection.

26. GDPR Statement

Unless stated elsewhere in this policy, the data gathered within this process is processed in line with our Data Protection policy which can be found on our website.

Any data gathered within this process will be retained in line with our records retention policy which can be found on our website.

If you have any questions about the way your data has been gathered and contained, please contact the Data Protection Office (DPO) at DPO@meridiantrust.co.uk