



SANDWELL ACADEMY



Equality Policy and
Objectives – 2023/24



Document Details

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Adopted by the Governing Board on:	
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Change Record

Version	Date	Description
2.1	November 2022	Rewrite of policy to include information about Academy advocates.
2.2	October 2023	Update of equality objectives

Introduction

At Sandwell Academy, we are committed to establishing a school in which everybody can thrive and take advantage of the opportunities we have on offer. With this in mind, and in line with the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Policy sets out the measures that we take to ensure that students and staff benefit from a truly inclusive environment in which differences are embraced and celebrated.

Sandwell Academy aims to meet its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) by having due regard for the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- 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

Overarching Aims

The primary aim of Sandwell Academy is to enable all students and staff to participate as fully as possible in every aspect of school life. This is achieved by developing each individual's self-confidence and supporting and encouraging them to fulfil their potential.

In doing so, the Academy will take appropriate steps to ensure equality of opportunity, foster good relations and eliminate discrimination. We acknowledge that discrimination can be both direct and indirect, and therefore we ensure that we work as a school community to challenge both explicit prejudice as well as implicit biases which may be held against individuals with a protected characteristic.

A protected characteristic is an element of one's identity which cannot be used to discriminate against them. There are nine legally protected characteristics:

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

Staff and governors are regularly reminded of their responsibilities under the Equality Act. New staff receive training on the Equality Act as part of their induction, and all staff receive refresher training throughout the year. In addition, regular briefings are used to provide updates to staff on topical concerns, ensuring that they're addressed in a timely fashion and do not lead to discrimination.

The Academy ensures it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made. Where appropriate, this will incorporate own-voice feedback from specific groups likely to be affected by such decisions. The school always considers the impact of significant decisions on particular groups. For example, when a school trip or activity is being planned, the school considers whether the trip:

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

It is the responsibility of all individuals within the Academy to promote equality and to act in accordance with our policies to report any form of discrimination in a timely fashion.

Equality Objectives

Objective 1:

To increase attendance to Session 3 for students with special educational needs and disabilities so that it is in line with their non-SEND peers.

Objective 2:

To reduce suspension rates for certain groups of pupils that are consistently higher than average. This includes pupils with SEN, pupils eligible for free school meals, looked after children, and pupils with Caribbean ethnicity.

Objective 3:

To establish the Academy's equality calendar in order to ensure that advocacy work systematically targets each of the protected characteristics.

Objective 4:

To establish the Academy's student equality committee in order to regularly and systematically gather student voice to inform advocacy work across the school.

Advancing Equality of Opportunity

As set out in the DfE guidance on the Equality Act, the Academy aims to advance equality of opportunity by:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people that are connected to a particular characteristic they have (e.g. pupils with disabilities, or gay pupils who are being subjected to homophobic bullying)
- Taking steps to meet the particular needs of people who have a particular characteristic (e.g. enabling Muslim pupils to pray at prescribed times)
- Encouraging people who have a particular characteristic to participate fully in any activities (e.g. encouraging all pupils to be involved in the full range of school societies)

In fulfilling this aspect of the duty, the school will:

- Publish attainment data each academic year showing how pupils with different characteristics are performing
- Analyse the above data to determine strengths and areas for improvement, implement actions in response and publish this information
- Make evidence available identifying improvements for specific groups (e.g. declines in incidents of homophobic or transphobic bullying)

- Publish further data about any issues associated with particular protected characteristics, identifying any issues which could affect our own pupils
- Regularly consider the ways in which our teaching and the curriculum provision will support high standards of attainment, promote common values, and help students understand and value the diversity that surrounds them, and challenge prejudice and stereotyping.
- Monitor the progress and achievement of pupils by the relevant and appropriate protected characteristics. This information will help the school to ensure that individual pupils are achieving their potential, the school is being inclusive in practice, and trends are identified which inform the setting of our equality objectives in the school improvement plan
- Collect and analyse information about protected characteristics in relation to staff recruitment, retention, training opportunities and promotions to ensure all staff have equality of opportunity. We will not ask health-related questions to job applicants before offering a job, unless it relates to an intrinsic function of the work they do. We will make reasonable adjustments such as providing auxiliary aids for our disabled staff.
- Seek the view of advisory staff and outside agencies and partnerships with other schools where this is needed. In planning the curriculum and resources the school will take every opportunity to promote and advance equality.
- Carefully monitor and deal with Bullying and Prejudice Related Incidents in accordance with our policies on Behaviour and Bullying. Regular training will be given to both existing and new staff to ensure that they are aware of the process for reporting and following up incidents of prejudice-related bullying.
- Expect that all staff will be role models for equal opportunities, deal with bullying and discriminatory incidents and be able to identify and challenge prejudice and stereotyping.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, the different forms of discrimination and what 'reasonable adjustments' mean in our provision.
- Consult with stakeholders, i.e. pupil, parents/carers, staff and relevant community groups, to establish equality objectives and draw up a plan based on information collected on protected groups and accessibility planning. These equality objectives will be reviewed and reported on annually.
- The school places the policy on its website to show how it is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in the Equality Act 2010 and advancing equality of opportunity.
- When drawing up policies, completing an equality impact assessment (EIA) to ensure a policy does not, even inadvertently, disadvantage groups of pupils with protected characteristics. As a minimum, the governing body must consider to what extent a new/revised policy, strategy or plan meets the Public Sector Equality Duties (eliminates discrimination, advances equality and fosters good relations for all the protected characteristics) and recommend changes/mitigations should they feel that the policy, strategy or plan could be improved to fulfil the Duties as per statutory requirements

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board will:

- Ensure that the equality information and objectives as set out in this statement are published and communicated throughout the school, including to staff, pupils and parents
- Ensure that the published equality information is updated at least every year, and that the objectives are reviewed and where applicable updated every year

- Delegate responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives on a daily basis to the headteacher

In addition, the designated member of staff for equality will:

- Support the headteacher in promoting knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives among staff and pupils
- Support the headteacher in identifying any staff training needs, and deliver training as necessary

Equality Advocates

At Sandwell Academy, we are committed to advocating for those within our community to ensure that we endlessly strive for true inclusion. The advocates support students in a number of ways:

- By listening to student views and concerns without giving personal views or passing judgement
- By helping students to explore options and rights
- By providing students with information to support informed decision-making
- By supporting students to speak to parents and/or members of staff
- By leading on whole-school events which foster increased awareness and acceptance of individual differences

Racial and Cultural Equality

Sandwell Academy serves a diverse community, and we aim to celebrate the richness of different cultures. In this endeavour, we take the following actions:

- Hosting workshops and groups to promote positive racial identity
- Hosting 'culture days' in which cultures are celebrated and shared (e.g. cultural dress or cultural food)
- Promoting acceptance through our PSHE curriculum and the wider curriculum (e.g. through specific module content in English and History)
- Celebrating significant cultural events
- Appointment of a Racial Equality Advocate
- Educating students and staff on the impact of racist language and awareness of unconscious bias

Disability Equality

At Sandwell Academy, we believe in reducing the social barriers for those with disabilities, ensuring that they are enabled to engage fully in Academy life. In this endeavour, we take the following actions:

- Promoting a culture of 'difference, not deficit'
- Full consideration of accessibility for disabled students, including those with low mobility (e.g. through the use of lifts) (see Accessibility Plan)
- A well-established SEND department to support early identification and advise on supportive interventions
- Regular student voice surveys for SEND students to ensure that assumptions are not made about their wishes and views

- Regularly finding opportunities to raise awareness about disabilities, including through PSHE and the wider curriculum
- Full participation in local community initiatives, including sporting competitions and careers events aimed at disabled students
- By making reasonable adjustments to all aspects of Academy life to ensure that disabled students are fully included within the school
- Assessment and application of Access Arrangements to ensure equitable access to assessments and examinations (see Access Arrangements Policy)
- Ensure that disabled students have full access to wider opportunities, such as our Session 3 offer and school trips
- Regularly updating our Academy's Accessibility Plan
- Regular training from the SENCo and Assistant Head for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equality and other professionals to raise awareness of disabilities
- Working with charities, such as Mind and the National Deaf Children's Society
- Appointing a Disability Advocate

Gender Equality

The World Health Organisation (WHO) stipulate that gender can be 'hierarchical and produce inequalities'. As such, Sandwell Academy is committed to ensuring that students and staff of all genders are supported to achieve to the best of their ability, with barriers to success being identified and dismantled. In this endeavour, we take the following actions:

- A zero-tolerance approach to harmful behaviours (for example, harmful sexualised behaviours) and sexist remarks
- Clear analysis of gender attainment gaps with targeted work to overcome these
- An effort to educate young people about healthy relationships and identify harmful or toxic behaviours
- Mentoring groups to support positive self-identity
- Ensure that the voices of all genders are elevated, contributing to decision making within the school (e.g. through student voice surveys)
- Amplification of historically marginalised voices, for example by celebrating the contributions of women in History, or educating students about the contributions of women to STEM subjects
- Appointment of a Gender Equality advocate, who serves as a trusted adult

LGBTQ+ Equality

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) estimates that approximately 3% of the UK population identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), with further individuals identifying as transgender. Stonewall (2017) estimates that 45% of LGBT students (including 64% of transgender students) experience bullying, with many also experiencing poor mental health and suicide ideation. At Sandwell Academy, we are committed to ensuring that students and staff who identify as LGBT+ are embraced as part of our school community and live authentically without fear of discrimination. In this endeavour, we take the following actions:

- Appointment of an LGBTQ+ advocate to act as a trusted adult
- An ethos whereby we respect students' self-identification (e.g. through the adoption of preferred pronouns)
- Through celebrating both local and national events, such as Pride Month
- Through a zero-tolerance approach to homophobic or transphobic bullying
- An inclusive curriculum featuring a diverse range of voices
- Training for staff on supporting student mental health, including for those who identify as LGBT+ and who are therefore at a heightened risk
- Staff trained specifically on LGBT+ matters, including support for students who experience gender dysphoria
- Place2Be and counselling made available for students who need emotional wellbeing support
- Engagement with charities who offer support for LGBT youth

Wider Equality Committee

The members of staff fulfilling the advocacy roles outlined above for part of our wider Equality Committee, alongside our advocates for mental health, bullying and Young Carers lead. The work of the Equality Committee aims to further social inclusivity within the Academy, celebrate differences and promote a wider understanding of diversity.