


# Mercia School

## Equality Policy Equality objectives

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***Headteacher***

This policy has been approved by the Local Governing Body and has been signed by the Chair of Governors	
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## *Equality Policy*

### *Equality objectives*

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### **Equality Impact Assessment**

Under the Equality Act (2010) we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.



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### **1. Vision and Values**

**At Mercia School we will offer an education that is traditional and academically rigorous. It is our belief that all pupils, whatever their background, have a right to a culturally rich education. We strive to ensure all pupils can access the very best universities in the land, or a valuable alternative.**

At Mercia School, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff and parents receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, gender, disability, religion and belief, or socio-economic background. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.

The achievement of pupils will be monitored by race, gender and disability and we will use this data to support pupils, raise standards and ensure inclusive teaching. We will tackle discrimination by the positive promotion of equality, challenging bullying and stereotypes and creating an environment which champions respect for all. At Mercia, we believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

### **2. Teaching and learning**

As well as the specific objectives set out in this policy; the school operates equality of opportunity in its day-to-day practice in the following ways. We aim to provide all our pupils with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement. To do this, we will:

- Use contextual data to improve the ways in which we provide support to individuals and groups of pupils;
- Monitor achievement data by ethnicity, gender and disability and action any gaps;
- Take account of the achievement of all pupils when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets;
- Ensure equality of access for all pupils and prepare them for life in a diverse society;
- Use materials that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender and disability, without stereotyping;
- Promote attitudes and values that will challenge racist and other discriminatory behaviour or prejudice, in line with our British Values policy and SMSC objectives;
- Provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures;
- Demand parental involvement in supporting their child's education;
- Encourage classroom and staffroom discussion of equality issues which reflect on social stereotypes, expectations and the impact on learning;
- Use teaching and classroom-based approaches appropriate for the whole school population, which are inclusive and reflective of our pupils.



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### **3. Admissions and exclusions**

Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and do not discriminate on race, gender, disability or socio-economic factors. We adhere to the Local Authority rules and regulations regarding admissions.

Exclusions will always be based on the school's Demanding Excellent Behaviour Policy. We will closely monitor exclusions to avoid any potential adverse impact and ensure any discrepancies are identified and dealt with. We always act in the best interests of the pupils at Mercia School.

### **4. Recruitment**

We recognise that by valuing and promoting equality and diversity for all employees and job applicants, and avoiding unlawful discrimination in employment and delivery of services, we will be able to deliver a first class education. To do this we will:

- Appoint on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law. However, we are concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community;
- Review our recruitment procedures and documents regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant skills and abilities and documents avoid stereotyping or use of words that may discourage groups with protected characteristics from applying;
- Ensure shortlisting is completed by more than one person in the Senior Team and Middle Leadership Team at every round of recruitment;
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market;
- Ensure that applicants are not asked about a health or disability before a job offer is made other than where necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to reasonable adjustments), to establish reasonable adjustments for fair interview and/or to carry out equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process);
- Ensure applicants are not asked questions about protected characteristics;
- Not make assumptions about immigration status based on appearance or apparent nationality. All employees regardless of nationality will be required to produce specified documents before employment to satisfy current legislation;
- Monitor diversity data as part of recruitment to help us avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity;
- Consider equality aspects such as 'equality cohorts' when appointing staff to ensure decisions are free of discrimination;

### **5. Employer Duties**

This section deals with aspects of equal opportunities relating to staff at Mercia School, including: training and development; opportunity for promotion; conditions of service; pay and benefits; and termination of employment. The policy covers staff working at all levels and includes Governors, Consultants, Contractors, Trainees and Agency Workers. We are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment.



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As an employer we need to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce. Actions to ensure this commitment is met include:

- All staff promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law;
- Monitoring of potential bullying and harassment of staff;
- Continued professional development opportunities for all staff identified through appraisal. All staff will be given appropriate access to training for their job and in order to enable them to progress;
- Monitoring of performance for pay and promotion decisions;
- Review of conditions of service, benefits and facilities to ensure they are available to all employees and there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them;
- Monitoring of physical features of premises to consider whether they place disabled employees or applicants at a disadvantage;
- Redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not discriminatory;
- Disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination whether they result in warning, dismissal or other action;
- Senior Team support to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

### 6. Equality and the Law

There are a number of statutory duties that must be met by every school in line with legislation from the Equality Act (2010).

#### 6a. Public Sector Equality Duty

Under the Equality Act (2010), it is unlawful to discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably on the basis of a 'protected characteristic.' The protected characteristics are:

- Sex;
- Race;
- Disability;
- Religion or belief;
- Sexual orientation;
- Gender reassignment;
- Pregnancy or maternity.

A person's age is also a protected characteristic in relation to employment, and in regard to the provision for goods and services. It does not however apply to pupils, and so the school is free to arrange pupils in classes based on their age group with materials appropriate to them.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty, which applies to all schools, including both LA maintained and Academies. The school must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the act;
- Advance equality and opportunity between people who share a prohibited characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relationships across all characteristics, between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Please see the Public Sector Equality Duty Guidance for Schools in England:

[https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/psed\\_guide\\_for\\_schools\\_in\\_england.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/psed_guide_for_schools_in_england.pdf)



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Having due regard in this context means that when significant decisions are being taken, thought must be given to the equality implications.

### **6b. Race equality**

The definition of race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

### **6c . Disability**

This section should be read in conjunction with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy and Accessibility Plan.

The Equality Act (2010) defines a disabled person as someone who has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

People with HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer (although not all cancers) are deemed disabled before they experience the long-term and substantial adverse effect on their activities. Section 18 has been amended so that individuals with a mental illness no longer have to demonstrate that it is "clinically well-recognised", although the person must still demonstrate a long-term and substantial adverse impact on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The Equality Act 2010 places a general duty on schools, requiring them to have due regard for the following when carrying out and delivering services:

- Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- Eliminating discrimination and harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability;
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- Encouraging participation in public life by disabled people;
- Taking steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment;

Under our specific duty we will:

- Prepare and publish equality information and objectives which cover the requirements for our Accessibility Plan by identifying our disability equality goals and actions to meet them;
- Review and revise this plan every three years.

### **6d. Gender equality**

The Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty Guidance for Schools in England (2014) places a general and specific duty on schools to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender and to promote equality of opportunity between female and male pupils and between women and men and transgender people. Under our general duty we will actively seek to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on grounds of sex and gender reassignment;
- Promote equality between men and women.



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Under our specific duty we will:

- prepare and publish equality information and objectives which covers the requirements for a Gender Equality Scheme identifying our gender equality goals and actions to meet them;
- review and revise this Scheme every three years.

### **6e. Sexual orientation**

The Equality Act (2010) made provision for regulations to be introduced to extend protection against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief to sexual orientation. The act makes discrimination unlawful in the area of goods, facilities and services on grounds of sexual orientation. For schools this means admissions, benefits and services for pupils and treatment of pupils.

### **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of Governors:

- The governing body has set out its commitment to equal opportunities in this document and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that the school is fully inclusive to pupils, and responsive to their needs based on the protected characteristics;
- The governing body seeks to ensure that people are not discriminated against when applying for jobs at our school on grounds of the protected characteristics;
- The governors take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school environment gives access to people with disabilities, and also strive to make school communications as inclusive as possible for parents, carers and pupils;
- The governors welcome all applications to join the school, whatever a child's socio-economic background, race, gender or disability;
- The governing body ensures that no child is discriminated against whilst in our school on account of their race, sex or disability, gender, religion and belief or the fact that they are pregnant or are undergoing gender reassignment.



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The role of the Headteacher:

- It is the Headteacher's role to implement the school's equality objectives and he is supported by the governing body in doing so.
- It is the Headteacher's role to ensure that all staff are aware of the equality objectives, and that teachers apply these guidelines fairly in all situations.
- The Headteacher ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to the equality information and objectives, so that no-one is discriminated against when it comes to employment or training opportunities.
- The Headteacher promotes the principle of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum, and promotes respect for other people and equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life.
- The Headteacher treats all incidents of unfair treatment and any incidents of bullying or discrimination, including racist incidents, with due seriousness.

The role of all staff (teaching and non-teaching):

- All staff will ensure that all pupils are treated fairly, equally and with respect, and will maintain awareness of the school's equality information and objectives;
- All staff will strive to provide material that gives positive images based on race, gender and disability, and challenges stereotypical images;
- All staff will challenge any incidents of prejudice, racism or homophobia, and record any serious incidents, drawing them to the attention of the Headteacher;
- Teachers support the work of ancillary or support staff and encourage them to intervene in a positive way against any discriminatory incidents;

### **8. Tackling Discrimination**

Harassment or victimisation on account of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation, gender reassignment or pregnancy is unacceptable and is not tolerated within the school environment.

All staff are expected to deal with any discriminatory incidents that may occur. They are expected to know how to identify and challenge prejudice and stereotyping; and to support the full range of diverse needs according to a pupil's individual circumstances.

Staff and governors should be aware of both direct and indirect discrimination and understand the differences.

Direct discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably because of a protected characteristic. In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is genuine occupational requirement. This must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. This will only be used in exceptional circumstances at Mercia School.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a 'provision, criterion or practice' is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage.





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Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic. Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that a person has a protected characteristic irrespective of whether they do (this does not include marriage/civil partnership and pregnancy/maternity). Third party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed in relation to a protected characteristic (other than marriage / civil partnership and pregnancy / maternity) by third parties such as parents, clients or customers.

Racist and homophobic incidents and other incidents of harassment or bullying are dealt with by the member of staff present, escalating to a class teacher/Headteacher where necessary. All incidents are reported to the Headteacher and racist incidents are reported to the governing body and local authority on a termly basis.

Types of discriminatory incidents that can occur are:

- Physical assault against a person or group because of their colour, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender.
- Use of derogatory names, insults and jokes.
- Racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory graffiti.
- Provocative behaviour such as wearing racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory badges or insignia.
- Bringing discriminatory material into the school.
- Verbal abuse and threats.
- Incitement of others to discriminate or bully due to victim's race, disability, gender or sexual orientation.
- Discriminatory comments in the course of discussion.
- Attempts to recruit others to discriminatory organisations and groups.
- Ridicule of an individual for difference e.g. food, music, religion, dress etc.
- Refusal to co-operate with other people on grounds of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Responding to and reporting incidents:

It should be clear to pupils and staff how they report incidents. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should view dealing with incidents as vital to the well-being of the whole school. This is further outlined in our Demanding Excellent Behaviour Policy. Our procedure for responding and reporting is outlined simply below:

- Incident;
- Member of staff to investigate further (if incident reported) or challenge behaviour immediately – Senior Team involvement as required;
- Response to victim and family;
- Response to perpetrator and family;
- Incident registered on Progresso;
- Incidents to be reported to governing body on a termly basis;
- Action taken to address issue with year group / school if necessary.



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### **9. Review of Progress and Impact**

Our Governing Body has agreed the equality objectives. We have a rolling programme for reviewing our school policies and their impact. In line with legislative requirements, we will review progress against our equality objectives annually and review the entire information and objectives on a four- year cycle.

We make regular assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to track pupil progress. As part of this process, we regularly monitor achievement by ethnicity, gender and disability, to ensure that all groups of pupils are making the best possible progress, and take appropriate action to address any gaps.

### **10. Publishing the Objectives and Demonstrating Compliance**

In order to meet the statutory requirements to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and to prepare and publish objectives, we will:

- Publish our information and objectives on the school website;
- Raise awareness of the objectives through the school newsletter, assemblies, staff meetings and other communications;
- Make sure hard copies are available.

### **11. Setting Equality Objectives**

Every year, we will review the previous year's equality objectives. It may be that objectives remain over a 3-year period to allow the school adequate time to action the relevant objectives.

Equality Objectives can be set on key improvement areas such as:

- Poor attendance
- Exclusion differentials
- Attainment differentials
- Access (physical and curriculum)
- Bullying
- Incidents based on prejudice of a protected characteristic
- Children who are missing from education
- Needs of parents (e.g. disabled, same-sex)
- Diversity friendly resources (e.g. books)
- Staff training
- Intergenerational activities
- Workforce diversity

### **12. Review of Progress and Impact**

In line with all policy documentation, we review statutory policies annually and others at least every three years or when there are changes to legislation or practice. In line with legislative requirements, we will review progress against our equality objectives annually and review the entire information and objectives on a three-year cycle.

We make regular assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to track progress. As part of this process, we regularly monitor achievement by ethnicity, gender and disability, to ensure that all groups of pupils are making the best possible progress, and take appropriate action to address any gaps.



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**Equality Objective 1: To further increase the representation of teachers from all different backgrounds over a three year period (September 2023 – September 2025). An increase from 8% up to 18% of the teaching workforce is the aim .**

### **Why we have chosen this objective:**

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty, which applies to all schools, including LA maintained, Academies and Free Schools. It requires that Mercia School must have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the act.

Sheffield is an ethnically diverse city, with around 19% of its population from black or minority ethnic groups. The largest of those groups is the Pakistani community, but Sheffield also has large Caribbean, Indian, Bangladeshi, Somali, Yemeni and Chinese communities. Furthermore, 50% of Mercia School are from minority ethnic groups. As of September 2020, 3% of our permanent teaching staff are from such ethnic minority groups. This is up from 0% in 2019.

Mercia School believes that the ethnicity of our workforce should be more reflective of the population served. Teachers of all different backgrounds serve as role models for all pupils, including ethnic minority pupils.

### **To achieve this objective we plan to:**

All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability, and in compliance with employment law. However, we will be concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.

When recruiting we will:

1. Ensure that our recruitment evenings and promotional videos include contributions from pupils from minority ethnic communities.
2. Guarantee appropriately qualified candidates from an ethnic minority background are called to interview. We take inspiration here from the NFL's 'Rooney Rule'.
3. The Headteacher will ensure that all interview panels give due regard to the equality information and objectives, so that no candidate is discriminated against when it comes to employment or training opportunities.
4. The Headteacher, alongside relevant Curriculum Leaders, will lead and check all short listing to ensure every candidate, including those from a minority ethnic group, are invited to interview on merit.
5. The school will keep a record of all decision making and notes from interviews/shortlisting for evaluation. If ethnic minority candidates are not successful, we will evaluate why and share feedback.

### **Progress we are making towards this objective:**

In September 2024, the school has 4 teachers from an ethnically diverse background. This equates to 6% of our teaching staff and represents a below-target goal of 10% by September 2024. However, we had 0 teachers from an ethnic minority background when we opened in 2018. This is an ongoing area to develop.

It is worth noting that we now have 9 ethnic minority colleagues working at the school in some capacity. This is approximately 10% of the school's workforce. We are committed to further increasing this number as well.



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**Equality Objective 2: To close the achievement gap by ensuring there is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of learners.**

### Why we have chosen this objective:

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty, which applies to all schools, including both LA maintained and Academies. It requires that the academy must have due regard to the need to:

- Advance equality and opportunity between people who share a prohibited characteristic and people who do not share it.

Mercia School is in its sixth year of operation and is an average-sized secondary school. We have more girls than boys on roll. Approximately, 19% of our pupils qualify for the Pupil Premium and approximately 55% of our pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. 19% of pupils have a SEND.

It is unacceptable that in our country there is such an enormous gap between the life chances of children from poor backgrounds and other children:

- In 2017, only 44.3% of disadvantaged students eligible for free school meals achieved a pass in both English and maths (grades 9-4) - the national average is 71.2%.
- Nationally, only 11.7% of disadvantaged students achieved the EBacc compared to 28.2% of all other students.
- In 2019, the average Progress 8 score for disadvantaged students was -0.55 while the score for all other students was +0.11.
- There is a 4.3 month gap at the start of school between disadvantaged children and their classmates; this more than doubles to 9.5 months by the end of primary school; and then more than doubles again, to 19.3 months, by the end of secondary school (EEF research)

At Mercia School, we work tirelessly to ensure that all pupils succeed, regardless of their background.

### To achieve this objective we plan to:

Achieving our mission will not be easy, but it can be achieved if we continue to:

- Operate strict routines and protocols.
- Have an unwavering focus on a high-quality curriculum
- Offer the very best teaching and support.

Using the Pupil Premium effectively is a key part of our strategy for closing the gaps (see academy website for details of our Pupil Premium allocation, spend and impact). The Pupil Premium strategy is overseen by the Deputy Headteacher

Specific groups of learners, including disadvantaged, SEND and most able, will continue to be targeted through activating prevention and intervention plans, completed each cycle.

A study group has been formed which includes predominantly disadvantaged SEN youngsters. This is in partnership with an Accelerated English, Mathematics and Science programme.

Interventions are overseen by the Assistant Headteacher.

### Progress we are making towards this objective:

We are delighted with the progress made in this area. There was no gap between our disadvantaged learners/other learners in our first set of results in August 2023:

Disadvantaged P8: 2.18

Non disadvantaged in England: +0.17

We expect this trend to continue in the lower years. Our Accelerated Learning programme has worked, alongside quality first teaching. In 2024/25, Progress 8 scores suggest a similar picture.



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**Equality Objective 3: To ensure that 100% of pupils participate in extra-curricular activities year-on-year. All pupils must participate in at least six different activities across the academic year.**

### **Why we have chosen this objective:**

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty, which applies to all schools, including both LA maintained, Academies and Free Schools. It requires that the school must have due regard to the need to:

- Foster good relationships across all characteristics, between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Approximately 29% of our pupils are from low-income families and so qualify for the pupil premium. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities. We want to ensure that every child at Mercia School regularly participates in at least six extra-curricular activities across the academic year. This also pertains to school showcases, school sports teams and educational visits where possible.

The Education Endowment Foundation clearly states that participating in after school programmes improves performance relating to measures of academic achievement. There is also evidence that there are wider benefits for low-income pupils in terms of attendance at school, behaviour and relationships with peers.

### **To achieve this objective we plan to:**

At Mercia School, the range of extra-curricular and electives is truly diverse, with activities such as choir, orchestra, technology, debate and public speaking, table tennis and philosophy. Popular choices have been cooking, football and rugby. This is not exhaustive list.

In addition, some Mercia School enrichment offers pupils opportunities to have experiences outside of the academy, such as Lego Robotics, The International History Bee and Bowl, HEPP with The University of Sheffield and so much more. Pupils taking part in Lego Robotics and UK Coding also had the opportunity to compete with other schools from Yorkshire and nationally. We will continue to ensure that extra-curricular activities are planned into the academy day and a wide range of activities and options are available to pupils. Since the school's inception, Electives have been timetabled twice per week.

We also plan to offer more activities which allow pupils to be certificated or achieve an award. This includes graded music examinations and Trinity Guildhall examinations for speech and drama.

### **Progress we are making towards this objective:**

100% of pupils contributed and participated in the school's electives programme. This includes pupils with SEND. This has been a constant target reached in every year of the school, not affected by the pandemic (2018-19, 2019-20, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25).