



# **Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Reach South Academy Trust is passionately committed to the principles of diversity, inclusion and belonging in both employment and the accessibility and delivery of services.
- 1.2 This means:
- Promoting equality and making services and employment accessible to all.
  - Treating people fairly, regardless of their race (colour; ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, gender, or gender identity, sex, or sexuality, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, disability, age or because of their association with someone who has that characteristic. These are known as “protected characteristics.”
  - Employees who exercise their right to belong to a trade union and to participate legitimately in trade union activities must also be treated fairly and in accordance with relevant legislation.
- 1.3 Reach South Academy Trust aims to have a workforce that is representative of the communities that it serves.
- 1.4 The principles of diversity, inclusion and belonging apply to the ways in which staff treat colleagues, pupils, students, parents, carers, key stakeholders such as Governors/Trustees and partners.
- 1.5 All employees, workers, or self-employed contractors whether part time, full time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be based on aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Trust.
- 1.6 Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals in our Trust as it seeks to develop the skills and abilities of its people. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with managers and supervisors, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every employee to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the Trust.
- 1.7 The Trust is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination and harassment of any kind, and will work to eliminate it, to create a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. All staff are expected to be accountable and to challenge discrimination.
- 1.8 As an employer, the Trust will also challenge social exclusion and discrimination, promote equality, and celebrate diversity to achieve excellence.
- 1.9 The Trust is also committed to meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires it to give due regard to:
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 1.10 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. However, contracts of employment themselves will be scrutinised as detailed above to ensure they have due regard to the commitments made by the Trust to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **2. Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Statement**

- 2.1 At Reach South Academy Trust, we are committed to creating a vibrant and inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all. This commitment extends to every aspect of our work; from the education we deliver to the staff we employ. We believe in fairness, equity, and promoting social mobility for all.
- 2.2 We actively promote inclusivity through our People policies and practices. We value and respect every individual, regardless of background, and strive to build a diverse staff and student body that reflects the richness of the communities we serve.
- 2.3 We dismantle barriers to opportunity by ensuring equal access to resources and development opportunities for all staff members. Our People policies are designed to be fair and unbiased, promoting a level playing field for career progression regardless of social or economic background.
- 2.4 Serving Our Local Communities: We actively engage with local communities to understand their needs and perspectives. Our recruitment practices prioritise attracting talent from diverse backgrounds within our local area, further strengthening the connection between the Trust and the communities it serves.
- 2.5 Our People policies are developed and implemented in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This ensures an environment characterised by dignity and respect, free from harassment, bullying, and victimisation.

## **3. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy**

- 3.1 The Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Director of People.
- 3.2 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the CEO and the Director of People. All school leaders and managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the contents.
- 3.3 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy which will be part of the induction process and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.

## **4. Who and what is covered by this policy?**

- 4.1 We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles, and circumstances. All employees including Initial Teacher Training (ITT) students, casual workers, Trustees, Governors, volunteers, contractors and sub-contractors and visitors are covered by this policy, and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development, and promotion.

- 4.2 The Trust's commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging extends to all aspects of the working relationship including but not exclusively:
- recruitment and selection procedures.
  - terms and conditions of employment, including pay and benefits.
  - training, appraisal, career development and promotion; work practices, conduct issues, discipline, grievances, and allocation of work.
  - termination of employment and post-employment matters, including references.

## **5. The legal framework**

- 5.1 The Trust's legal obligations and duties include those defined by the Equality Act 2010 in relation to discrimination and social inclusion.
- 5.2 The Equality Act 2010 provides further guidance.

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

- 6.1 The Schools' Senior Leadership Teams, as well as the CEO and our Trust Executive Directors, will have the day-to-day responsibility for embedding diversity into the culture of each School and Central Service teams.
- 6.2 The School's Senior Leadership Teams, CEO and Trust Executive Directors will ensure that opportunities for promotion, learning and development are accessible to all staff and are available on a fair and equal basis. New staff will undertake an appropriate induction which covers diversity, inclusion and belonging.
- 6.3 The Schools' Senior Leadership Teams, CEO and Trust Executive Directors understand that discrimination and harassment are unlawful and unacceptable and will challenge any inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour they become aware of.
- 6.4 The Schools' Senior Leadership Teams, CEO and Trust Executive Directors responsible for ensuring that all staff understand that if they harass colleagues, they may be subject to disciplinary action and could also be held personally liable.
- 6.5 Staff are expected to take an active part in promoting diversity, inclusion and belonging in everything that they do at work and to treat everyone in their working environment with dignity and respect.
- 6.6 The Trust requires all staff to behave in a non-discriminatory way towards colleagues, pupils, and members of the public. Failure to do so will be taken seriously and could lead to disciplinary action.
- 6.7 Staff may challenge inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour where they feel confident to do so or to report it to their line manager. If the behaviour relates to a member of staff's line manager, the member of staff should report it to the next level of management.
- 6.8 Staff who make unfounded or malicious complaints or invoke the policy vexatiously may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **7. Forms of discrimination**

- 7.1 Discrimination by or against an employee is prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.
- 7.2 Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics (see section 1.2). Direct discrimination may take the form of direct discrimination by association whereby someone is treated less favourably due to the protected characteristic of someone they are associated with such as a disabled partner. Direct discrimination can also take the form of discrimination by perception whereby a person is treated differently based on a protected characteristic they are thought to have, whether this perception by others is correct or not, such as being perceived to be bisexual.
- 7.3 Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the shared protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. Indirect discrimination may take the form in relation to working hours whereby an employee may have caring responsibilities but is required to work full-time or unsocial hours.

## **8. Managing diversity**

- 8.1 Managing diversity goes much further than having a diversity, inclusion and belonging policy. It is about recognising, respecting and responding to individual differences and needs and treating people fairly and equally but not necessarily in the same way.
- 8.2 The ownership of managing diversity is a core part of the Trust and is integrated within each School's strategic goals including the launch in 2021 of the Trusts 'Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging' Steering Group. All staff are required to work within the ethos of diversity, inclusion and belonging and will be given appropriate training and guidance to do this.

## **9. Unconscious bias**

- 9.1 The Trust recognises the dangers of unconscious bias arising at work, which is where an opinion is formed on an individual by a manager or colleague without them necessarily being aware they have formed it.
- 9.2 There are many different forms of unconscious bias, ranging from an affinity towards those of a similar background to placing too much significance on what has been identified as a negative trait.
- 9.3 The Trust will work against forms of unconscious bias in all decisions taken for employment, including recruitment, promotion, and training opportunities, with a focus on promoting diversity and inclusion
- 9.4 In particular, the Trust will implement the following:
- Anonymised recruitment up to and including shortlisting stage.
  - Omitting all personal questions from job interviews.
  - Where possible, seek to form diverse panels to make decisions. Referring to specific job criteria when making recruitment decisions.
  - Discounting any favourable personal relationships with staff.
  - Continual review all policies, process, and practices to ensure fairness

## **10. Training and development**

- 10.1 All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the Trust and all promotion decisions will be made based on merit and a fair and equitable recruitment and selection process.
- 10.2 Training and development needs will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the Trust. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.
- 10.3 The Trust is committed to providing regular equality training to all staff members and other relevant individuals, such as those in governance roles.
- 10.4 This training will form part of the induction process for newly appointed staff and other relevant individuals.

## **11. Breaches of the policy**

- 11.1 In the first instance, staff who believe that they may have been discriminated against are encouraged to raise the matter through their Line Manager, or an appropriate Senior Manager. Alternatively, they can raise the matter through the Reach South Academy Trust Grievance Policy, as this may be considered a disciplinary matter.
- 11.2 Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant policy. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in a vexatious or malicious manner will, be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.
- 11.3 Any member of staff who is alleged to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to an investigation under the disciplinary policy. Where such behaviour is evidenced and appropriate escalated it may constitute gross misconduct and as such, could result in summary dismissal.
- 11.4 The Trust will adopt a strict approach to serious breaches of the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy.
- 11.5 Advice and support can be obtained by contacting the People Team at [people@reachsouth.org](mailto:people@reachsouth.org) Employees are also encouraged to contact their trade union representative for advice and support where appropriate.

## **12. Monitoring of the policy**

- 12.1 The Trust will continue to review of the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives. As part of this process Trust will monitor the composition of job applicants and the benefits and career progression of its staff.
- 12.2 The impact of both new and existing policies and practices on different groups will be assessed routinely in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

### **13. Review of the policy**

- 13.1 This policy is reviewed as required by Reach South Academy Trust in consultation with the recognised Trade Unions.
- 13.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years, earlier review may be required in response to exceptional circumstances, organisational change or relevant changes in legislation or guidance.
- 13.3 We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively in partnership with the recognised Trade Unions.

## POLICY HISTORY

| Policy Date    | Summary of change                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Contact                                               | Implementation Date | Review Date    |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| May/June 2021  | Consultation with recognised Trade Unions                                                                                                                                                                                            | All Recognised Trade Unions                           | N/A                 | N/A            |
| June 2021      | Implementation of new Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                         | All Recognised Trade Unions                           | June 2021           | September 2024 |
| September 2024 | Reviewed – no changes                                                                                                                                                                                                                | People Team                                           | September 2024      | June 2027      |
| September 2025 | <p>Addition of DIB Statement Amended reference of Human Resources to People Team. Amended reference of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging.</p> <p>Consultation with recognised Trade Unions</p> | <p>People Team</p> <p>All Recognised Trade Unions</p> | September 2025      | June 2028      |