**UNLOCKING POTENTIAL**

**LEVELLING THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ARENA**

# EQUALITY AND DIGNITIY AT WORK POLICY

## Mission Statement

The Levels School exists to provide a nurturing environment in which students with specific learning difficulties and co-occurring diagnoses can develop their self-esteem and aspire to be independent young adults who value the rights, responsibilities and rules that exist to promote and support their future welfare. Our approach toward establishing this ideology is predicated on trauma-informed practice and an obligation to develop the social skills required to build their future aspirational communities. We exist to help them find their level.

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| **Date of policy** | September 2024 |
| **Next review date** | September 2026 |
| **Frequency of policy review (annually, every two years)** | Every two years |
| **Policy owner** | Caroline Cook – Head teacher |
| **Published policy** | Yes ☒ No ☐ |
| **List of connected policies** | Admissions Policy, Accessibility Policy, Curriculum Policy, SEND Policy, PSHE Policy, Relational Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Grievance Policy, Discipline Policy, Anti Bullying Policy, Safer Recruitment Policy, Media and Publications Policy, Student Expectations, Whistle blowing procedures, PSHE Policy, British Values policy |
| **Approved / Date** | Approved by Governing Body |

This policy covers all premises known as The Levels School.

**The Board of Governors acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective and follows regulatory requirements. Governors undertake a review to satisfy themselves that the implementation of this policy is effective.**

**The Board of Governors ensures the establishment of familiarity with and the effective operation through monitoring, of school policies, approving those requiring GB sign-off in line with a regular cycle of school policy reviews. This occurs through a cycle of governor committee meetings and full board meetings.**

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## Introduction

The Equality and Diversity procedure and policy is applicable to all students, parents, prospective parents, staff, volunteers, governors and visitors at The Levels School and has been developed in accordance with The Equality Act 2010 and Independent School Standards (Revised April 2019). This policy details the school's approach to promoting equality and diversity to ensure fair and lawful practices and procedures at all times.

## Our Ethos and Values

The Levels School is an equal opportunity employer. We support difference, celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all.

We believe that each individual is unique, possessing their own unique abilities. We endeavour to embrace that uniqueness.

At The Levels School, our ethos encompasses a culture of inclusivity where students are aware of their rights, develop responsibility, learn to respect others and in turn are respected. Learning will be interesting, accessible and relevant to all.

We aim to nurture in our students the same values which drive our staff team:

- Courage: to meet new challenges with bravery and resilience and to never give up.
- Compassion: to be kind to ourselves and others and to celebrate what makes us unique.
- Creativity: to explore the world with curiosity and develop creative thinking skills.

Our ethos and values will inform our curriculum, teaching, extracurricular activities and set an example as a good employer, to promote equal opportunities.

## Statement of intent

The Levels School is committed to teaching and promoting equal treatment, value and respect for all members of the school community, students, parents, prospective parents, staff, volunteers, governors and visitors regardless of an individual's identity. As outlined in the Equality Act 2010, this includes the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. The Levels School extends this list further by adding additional characteristics that we actively promote equality for: social background, linguistic background, special educational need, learning difficulty, body image, nationality, academic or sporting ability and whether a person is adopted or a carer.

This policy combined with our ethos and values aim to:

- Comply with The Levels School's equality duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of any of the protected characteristics that are highlighted within the Equality Act 2010.
- Promote equality of opportunity for all members of The Levels School community.

- Ensure that our practices reflect our belief that every student, parent, prospective parent, staff member, volunteer, governor and visitor is special and that all should have the opportunity and support to develop their skills and abilities to achieve their potential and to apply them in a way that is appropriate to a 21st century world.
- Ensure that The Levels School systems and practices develop and maximise the achievement of all students giving them access to the best possible life choices and chances in a changing world.
- Support students in using their learning and skills to make informed and unbiased choices, which are free from stereotyping, for their future life.
- Ensure that The Levels School remains socially inclusive and offers equal access and opportunity to all its students.
- Maintain practices that support equality of opportunity for all existing staff and in future recruitment.
- Oppose and challenge prejudice in any form within The Levels School and to promote good relations within the school and local community.
- Recognise the importance of fundamental British values with regard to mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Demonstrate how our approach to equality and diversity will be monitored.
- Ensure that any pupil, parent, prospective parent, staff, governor or visitor who believes they have been discriminated against, is aware of the complaints procedure.

## Definitions

**Discrimination-** To treat one particular group of people less favourably than others because of their race, ethnicity, colour, religion or belief, gender or maternity, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, learning difficulty, body image, social background, nationality or national origin, cultural background, linguistic background, special educational need, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or academic or sporting ability.

**Direct discrimination -** Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

**Indirect discrimination** - Indirect discrimination can occur when there is a provision, criterion or practice in the organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic and that practice cannot be objectively justified. To justify imposing an apparently neutral policy that disadvantages those with a shared protected characteristic, it must be shown that applying the policy across the board is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

**Discrimination by association** - This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

**Perception discrimination -** This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

**Harassment -** Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual."

**Victimisation -** Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done ("a protected act") in connection with the act.

## Responsibility

The Board of Governors are responsible for making sure The Levels School follows all points within the equality and dignity at work policy and meets its legal responsibilities with respect to equality in the school and the work place.

It is the responsibility of all employees and members of the Board of Governors to maintain appropriate standards of behaviour and to ensure they support a positive working environment for all.

We will take active steps to communicate this Equality and Dignity at work Policy to all students, parents, staff, and governors of the school. This will be by way of inclusion in new staff induction process, training and refresher training for all staff and governors on a regular basis.

In relation to the students, the Head teacher, Senior Leadership team and Middle Leadership team are responsible for:

- Ensuring policies and procedures are in place to comply with all equality legislation.
- Ensuring the school implements its equality and diversity policies and codes of practice.
- Being mindful and take action to avoid all forms of discrimination, harassment and bullying to ensure that equal rights and opportunities are provided to all.
- Making sure that all staff know their responsibilities and receive the support and training necessary to carry them out.
- Ensure that staff act as role models of inclusive behaviour and practice.
- Ensuring that accurate records are kept of any cases of unfair discrimination, harassment or bullying.

In relation to the staff, the Head teacher and the Senior Leadership team are responsible for:

- Ensuring that recruitment and selection is carried out in accordance with the current policy and guidance on equality and diversity.
- Ensuring that prospective employees are also treated fairly and consistently in line with the principles outlined within this policy.
- Ensuring that employees receive an appropriate and fully accessible induction including information about policies, practices and procedures when they start a new post and that they continue to be informed and updated about changes to these.

- Ensuring that supervision, appraisal and learning development plans for employees take full account of the school's commitment to equality and diversity as set out in this policy and procedure.
- Ensuring that equality and diversity is fully integrated into any training and development that is commissioned and delivered for employees.
- Taking appropriate action in relation to complaints and concerns raised by employees and prospective employees about discrimination or harassment.
- Being mindful and take action to avoid all forms of discrimination, harassment and bullying to ensure that equal rights and opportunities are provided to all.

All staff are responsible for:

- Promoting equality and diversity and avoiding unfair discrimination against any member or visiting member of the school.
- Using practices that gives everyone equal opportunities.
- Avoiding any segregation of staff or students, due to a protected characteristic or personal characteristic, that denies them the choice or opportunity to interact socially, or to interact in the educational setting.
- Challenging any incidents of unfair discrimination or racial, sexual or other stereotyping, perpetrated by students or other staff.
- Keeping up-to-date with equality law and participating in equal opportunities and diversity training annually.
- Reporting any incidents of unfair discrimination, harassment or bullying to senior managers.

Students are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their actions and the language that they use is respectful of others.
- Adhering to the school's equality and diversity policy and student expectations.

## Admissions

The school treats every application for admission in a fair and equal way in accordance with this policy and the School's Admissions Policy. The school accepts applications from, and admits, students irrespective of any protected characteristic.

Parents must inform the school when completing the registration form of any special circumstances affecting their child (such as learning support needs) which may affect the child's ability to fully participate in the education provided by the school. The school will not offer a place to a child if, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the school cannot adequately cater for and/or meet their needs.

## Recruitment

The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equal opportunities policy. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.

Through-out the recruitment process, active steps will be taken to ensure equal opportunities. This includes:

- We will not confine our recruitment to areas or media sources which provide only, or mainly, applicants of a particular group.
- All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job.
- All employees involved in the recruitment process will periodically review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.
- Short listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.
- Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
- We will not disqualify any applicant because he/she is unable to complete an application form unassisted unless personal completion of the form is a valid test of the standard of English required for the safe and effective performance of the job.

## Curriculum and Extracurricular Delivery

All staff play an active role in monitoring the implementation of The Levels School's policy on equal opportunities. The principles of equality and diversity are embedded in our academic and social curriculum. Positive and proactive steps will be taken to prevent discrimination against, or victimisation of, any young person in the provision of education or access to any benefit, facility or service including educational trips, work experience and leisure activities. To ensure this within our curriculum, here are some considerations taken:

- The Levels School celebrates cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, and strives to educate students about different cultures and faiths in a sensitive and respectful way. At the core of this is our Ethics and Philosophy curriculum, which covers all six major world religions at both KS2 and KS3. In KS3, different groups within religious faiths are also explicitly taught, helping students to understand and appreciate the depth of diversity. Culture can be separate to faith and cultural differences within Britain and across the world are explored. In Year 9, students have the opportunity to consider different points of view in relation to ethics and philosophy, for example veganism and medical ethics. Teaching about different faiths and cultures is strengthened through the tutor programme, extracurricular, and cross-curricular links. Each week the whole school is presented with an Ethics and Philosophy question to consider and debate. In History lessons, students explore the Protestant-Catholic divide of the 16th century and the Great Reformation. In Geography they study a range of cultures from across the globe. Curiosity is encouraged, and students are taught how to contribute to sensitive discussions respectfully, taking into account different viewpoints.
- In addition to teaching about different religious and cultural groups, we also teach about other minority groups. Black history from before the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups today is explicitly taught in Year 9. The Levels School also recognises the importance of

teaching about BAME groups across different units and subjects rather than confining it to a single 'black studies' module; therefore, teaching about ethnic minorities is interwoven across different units within many subjects. For example, in history, students in KS2 study Cheddar Man in the Stone Age unit and KS3 students learn about black Tudors during the Elizabethan England unit. In Geography, ethnic diversity is studied within the topic of development, both within Britain and across the world. Similarly, women's history is woven throughout the history curriculum, and the development of women's rights is explicitly discussed within the Golden Age of Piracy, Elizabethan England and Jack the Ripper units. The history and decriminalisation of homosexuality is covered within the Crime and Punishment unit of GCSE history, and LGBTQI history is used as a model for teaching KS3 students about interpretations.

- The PSHE curriculum promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, through our modules on Citizenship and responsibility. Delivery of this subject relies on creating and maintaining a forum of trust within the classroom and as such it helps build communal identity as well as supporting our students as they work to find their developing selves, understand their responsibility toward their mental health and the wellbeing of those around them and build the vocabulary they need to ask the right questions of the world they live in.
- The PE Department aims to be fully inclusive in all areas of the curriculum. We strive to ensure that students are challenged and feel a sense of achievement regardless of their level of ability or experience. Lessons are differentiated to ensure all students can take an active part in lessons by either adapting rules, equipment or the role that they play within a lesson such as participator, leader, referee etc. No student will be prohibited from taking part in an activity based on gender, race, sexuality or disability; however, the activity or group may be altered for safety reasons. A range of inter-school fixtures will be arranged that provide opportunities for every student to be able to represent the school, at different levels of competitiveness including open competitions, matched ability, specific SEN competitions and talent pathway programmes.

### Social Communication

All students will receive a weekly social communication lesson. They will learn the core social skills that underlie the ability to understand and exhibit mutual respect and tolerance for people with a range of different characteristics.

### Extracurricular

The Levels Schools seeks to make learning about equality and diversity relevant and interesting with activities outside of lessons. This includes making links to the community, taking part in debates and participation in school council.

### Pastoral Care

The Levels School will make reasonable adjustments (on a case-by-case basis) for staff or students who identify as gender neutral, gender fluid, are undergoing gender reassignment or are gender questioning.

These will be used to:

- Promote tolerance of each other and respect for each other's position within the school community.
- Promote positive images and role models to avoid prejudice and raise awareness of related issues.
- Foster an open-minded approach and encourage students to recognise the contributions made by different cultures. Bias should be recognised and diversity supported – both within the school community and understanding its application in the wider world.
- Support students to understand why and how we will deal with offensive language and behaviour.
- Support students to understand why we will deal with any incidents promptly and in a sensitive manner.
- Provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their protected or personal characteristics, to be able to access the curriculum.

## Uniform

All students are required to wear a uniform. The current uniform has been consciously designed to ensure all students feel as comfortable as possible whilst at school. The same choices are available to both genders.

The Head teacher will consider requests from parents and students for variations in the uniform for reasons related to SEND, sensory needs, gender reassignment and/or on religious grounds provided they are consistent with the school's policy on Health and Safety and it is reasonable in all the circumstances including in light of the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

## Resources

The school's aim is to provide for all students according to their educational needs, irrespective of sex, ability or ethnic origin. Resources will be designed to suited the students' learning style with reference to their special educational needs, thus ensuring full access to the curriculum for all students.

Educational resources will:

- Portray a view of the world as seen from different perspectives so that students realise how it feels to be a member of another cultural or minority group.
- Be as factually accurate, realistic and up-to-date as possible, especially with illustrations, texts and websites.
- Avoid stereotyping or caricaturing; portray all ethnic or cultural groups positively.
- Make full use of the myths and legends of different cultures, where appropriate for the given lesson.

## Environment and Premises

It is ensured that the environment reflects the school's commitment to a policy of equal opportunities for all. Education displays will reflect a positive image of race, religious belief, gender identity, physical ability and special need.

The Levels School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments for students and staff with a disability to ensure they do not suffer a substantial disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled students. The school will inform and consult with parents about what reasonable adjustments, if any, the school are able to make for their child.

The Levels School monitors and reviews the physical environment to consider what reasonable and proportionate steps can be taken to alleviate any substantial disadvantage caused to disabled students or staff. The school has an Accessibility Plan in place which should be viewed in conjunction to this policy.

### Fire/evacuation plan

When students are enrolled at The Levels School, there will be a discussion around a suitable Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). This will ensure that for disabled students, their needs in the case of emergency evacuation are met with dignity and efficiency. Staff and visitors too will have opportunity to have the same discussion about the best way to evacuate the building quickly. A PEEP will be created for each person who needs one, and this will be shared with the Fire Wardens and Fire Officer. Trained Fire Wardens will be available on each floor to support those with additional needs, whether by using an evacuation chair, supporting those with visual or hearing loss, or just spreading calm to those who may be anxious or frightened.

## Special Needs

As a Specialist School, The Levels School provides resources, and, where necessary, creates resources to cater for children of every ability. All staff will help to overcome any potential barriers to learning by providing for students' diverse needs and learning styles including any learning support needs and/or disabilities a pupil may have. The Levels School will carefully consider any proposals for auxiliary aids and services in light of a pupil's disability.

The Levels School wants to ensure that each pupil is given equal opportunities to engage with and enjoy learning. On site Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists will be able to provide in-class and 1:1 support to help students access the learning.

All students will have a Student Passport. All targets will be written in consultation with the child, relevant teachers and therapists and will be shared with the parents. This will ensure that we can support their main areas of need as a staff team.

## Monitoring

We will monitor the impact of this policy on students, parents, staff and governors. In particular, we will monitor the impact of our policies on the attainment levels of our students. To monitor our student's attainment, we will collect information about student performance and progress, analyse it and use it to examine trends. To help interpret this

information we will monitor the following areas that could have an impact on student attainment such as:

- Attendance
- Exclusion
- Harassment and bullying
- Curriculum teaching and learning (including language and cultural needs) and provision for students with special educational needs
- Parental involvement
- Working with the community
- Support advice and guidance

## Breach to this policy

Any students who are in breach of this policy may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy.

Harassment in all its forms is unlawful and unacceptable; our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies contain clear procedures for dealing with unlawful discrimination. Students will be encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour and will be supported to recognise where something could have been done differently. All staff who are in breach of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

## Complaints

The school will seek to provide a supportive environment for those who make claims of discrimination and/or harassment.

Any student, who believes that they have been discriminated against or have been subject to discriminatory conduct should talk to one of their key members of staff, Tutor, Therapist (if applicable) to seek remedy to such matters.

Any pupil who harasses another pupil on the grounds of any protected characteristic will be subject to the school's disciplinary measures in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and student expectations.

If parents feel this policy has been breached, they should raise their concern through the School's Complaints Policy which is available on the school website or can be available upon request.

Any employee who believes they have been discriminated against or have been subject to discriminatory conduct, should talk to the Head Teacher, where the procedure in the Grievance policy will be followed. They can also follow the procedures in the Whistleblowing Policy should they prefer.

Reviewed: C. COOK 02.09.2024