

## **Downs View Equalities policy**

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## 1. Introduction and context

### 1.1. Why we have developed this Equality Policy

This Equality Policy for Downs View brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality. It includes all the protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010 as well as other aspects which have the potential to discriminate against or to devalue any individuals within our community. We are committed to the development of cohesive communities both within our physical boundaries and within our local, national and global environments. We embrace the aim of working together with others to improve our learners' educational and health and wellbeing outcomes.

In drawing together this policy we have used existing Downs View policies:

- Equality Policy 2019
- Equal opportunities
- Racial Equality
- Disability Equality (including Accessibility Strategy / Access Plan)
- SEN
- Anti-Bullying

As well as information from those listed below. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Physical Intervention
- Safeguarding
- Induction

Our Equality Policy is inclusive of our whole community – learners, staff, parents/carers, visitors and partner agencies.

The purpose of this Policy is to set out how our practice and policies have due regard to the need to:

- foster good relations between groups and to promote community cohesion
- advance equality of opportunity and
- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

It explains how we aim to listen to and involve learners, staff, parents and the community in achieving better outcomes for our young adults.

### 1.2. Downs View within the wider context

We are a Brighton based organisation supporting children and young people aged 2-25 years who have Education Health and Care (EHC) plans for a range of complex needs relating to their Cognition and Learning, such as profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and severe learning difficulties (SLD). Many of our students have additional needs such as a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC).

As a maintained special school and post 16 college and independent specialist post 16 institution (SPI), we are committed to understanding our community. We review data on the backgrounds of our community members and the attainment and

wellbeing of our learners. We use this data to plan improvements that will benefit our school and colleges.

For up to date statistics on our current population, please contact the Headteacher or refer to the Equality information and objectives document which is published on the website.

### 1.3. Our vision statement about equality

We will encourage all learners and staff to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and show respect for other cultures and beliefs. Partnerships with parents and the local community are actively encouraged and equality of opportunity will be fully promoted.

### 1.4. Overall aims of our Equality Policy

We will build on our similarities and seek enrichment from our differences and so promote understanding and learning between and towards others to create cohesive communities. We recognise and accept our equality duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and have sought to involve the whole community in order to ensure better outcomes for all.

We aim:

- to promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, genders & gender identity, cultures, faiths, abilities, sexual orientation and ethnic origins
- to promote equality of access and opportunity within our organisation and within our wider community
- to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

We recognise that it is unlawful to discriminate against a learner, prospective learner, a member of staff or prospective member of staff by treating them less favourably if they have protected characteristics:

- |                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| • age (staff only) | • religion or belief      |
| • sex              | • sexual orientation      |
| • race             | • gender reassignment     |
| • disability       | • pregnancy or maternity. |

At Downs View School previously we have produced an access plan which addresses our statutory duties to:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- improve the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided.

The accessibility strategy (access plan) is appended as Appendix 1. We have also audited the access all learners of varying needs have to cultural opportunities, for example, to ensure equity.

## 2. Our approach

### 2.1. Introduction

As well as the specific equalities objectives that we are working on and are set out in our improvement plan, we take a whole organisation approach to equalities and community cohesion. We seek to embed equality of access, opportunity and outcomes for all members of our community.

We actively seek out opportunities in and outside of the curriculum to embrace the following key concepts:

- **Shared humanity** - Identifying commonality and shared values, aspirations and needs underpins our approach to equality. We value our fundamental similarities and universality
- **Valuing difference and diversity** - We appreciate the richness within our differences and look for ways of celebrating and understanding them better
- **Interdependence, interaction and influence** - We recognise that, as they evolve, distinct cultures, beliefs and lifestyles will impact on and inform each other
- **Social cohesion** within our organisation and within our local community
- **Excellence** - We aim to inspire and recognise high personal and collective achievement throughout our community, the UK and the wider world. Excellence is to be found everywhere
- **Personal and cultural identity** - We will provide opportunities to explore and value the complexity of our personal and cultural identities
- **Fairness and social justice** - We will develop our understanding of the inequality that exists in society and explore ways of individually and collectively promoting a more equitable society.

### 2.2. Teaching and learning

We aim to provide all our learners 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 learners;
- Monitor achievement data by the protected characteristics (where possible) and action any gaps;
- Take account of the achievement of all learners when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets;
- Recognise the individuality of every learner and ensure their learning is personalised as much as possible;
- Ensure equality of access for all learners and prepare them for life in a diverse society;
- Use materials that reflect the diversity of the organisation's population and local community in terms of the protected characteristics, without stereotyping;
- Promote attitudes and values that will challenge racist and other discriminatory behaviour or prejudice;
- Provide opportunities for learners to appreciate their own identity and culture and celebrate the diversity within our community, the local context and wider;
- Seek to involve all parents/carers in supporting their child's education;

- Encouraging classroom and staffroom discussion of equality issues which reflect on social stereotypes, expectations and the impact on learning;
- Including teaching and classroom-based approaches which are inclusive and reflective of our learners.

## 2.3. Support for our learners

### 2.3a Auxiliary Aids

As an education provider for learners with complex needs including Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) we fully recognise the need and value of aids, equipment and assistive technology. Upon recommendation from the relevant, recognised therapist and through discussion at Annual Review of the learner's EHC plan we will purchase the necessary item(s) to support an individual's needs.

### 2.3b Pastoral Support

We have classes which are small with high adult:learner ratios. We are able to give learners individual time and support in order to meet their needs or specific protected characteristic. In exceptional cases, where learners do need consistent high levels of support we will allocate additional one to one staffing to provide consistent support. We will also be flexible in our curriculum and teaching to enable the learner to receive the support they need.

We have also, for example, developed and implemented a programme on ASC Awareness for our more aware autistic learners to support their emerging understanding of the impact on them (and others) of their autism.

## 2.4. Admissions

Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and do not discriminate on any of the protected characteristics. As a special education provider, the local authority determines admissions through the statutory assessment process.

## 2.5. Exclusions

It is our professional belief and practise that, wherever possible, we will not exclude learners for behaviour or any other reasons. This is supported by our proactive and supportive approach to behavioural issues which means that we recognise that it is our professional duty to understand and resolve difficulties. There will be times, however, due to levels of violence and risk to colleagues that this approach is not viable.

We will closely monitor behaviour to ensure that we assess our interventions to best effect to support behaviour. We utilise the PROACT-SCIPr-UK® philosophy and monitor all physical interventions to ensure consistency and appropriateness. We work closely with parents and carers at all times to ensure we are all focused on the individual learner's needs. Our behaviour practise is scrutinised externally through our active engagement with the local multi-agency Restraint Reduction Network.

## 2.6. Religious observance

We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, learners and parents/carers, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice. This is managed through our broad and challenging curriculum which is underpinned by a strong spiritual, moral, social, cultural (SMSC) ethos.

For example, we include visits to places of worship (including Buddhist temple and local church); celebrate such festivals as Diwali, Chinese New Year, as well as more Eurocentric ones; host cultural sessions (string quartet, folk musician/story teller, Sierra Leone drumming & dance performers).

We hold assemblies which are spiritual but not religious in focus and deal with many SMSC related issues through those and our daily reflection times in class.

### 3. Our Staff

- 3.1. We comply fully with legislation which protects our staff (including teachers, teaching assistants, supervisors and student teachers) from discrimination based on the protected characteristics.
- 3.2. With regard to disability, we make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a disabled person being at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with people who are not disabled. However, the nature of our complex and challenging population means that the extent to which we can make reasonable adjustments for staff who have disabilities or difficulties is limited. Our learners must be supported by staff who are able to respond to their needs, behaviour, medical issues and episodes immediately. Failure to do so represents a significant health and safety risk. Equally, the challenging behaviour of some learners puts staff who are less physically able at significant risk of injury.
- 3.3. Complying to legislation includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, training and employment practices (such as dress codes) and disciplinary procedures. We make efforts to ensure that the diversity of our workforce reflects that of our local community and wider society.
- 3.4. In accordance with the Equality Act we do not enquire about the health of an applicant (unless specific requirements are intrinsic to the role) until a job offer has been made or we require job applicants to complete a generic 'all encompassing' health questionnaire as part of the application procedure. (See the Safer Recruitment Toolkit for further guidance.)
- 3.5. We will ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and take seriously and act on incidents of harassment and discrimination recognising that our staff may be either victims or perpetrators.
- 3.6. We use staff surveys and open discussions to assess the impact of our policies but also the relationships between staff. We alter our approaches in response to what we find and we are producing a staff conduct policy to support this. We interpret our duties positively; take the necessary actions to remove barriers to inclusion and work hard to ensure a safe, positive and inclusive environment. We have also set up a cross-organisation Staff Wellbeing Team with an allocated senior admin manager to have responsibility for oversight of staff wellbeing in particular.



- 3.7. We have adopted the advice and guidance received from Brighton and Hove City Council on equalities matters. Relevant policies include:
- Wellbeing Framework
  - Dignity & respect at work
  - Whistleblowing policy
  - Safer Recruitment Toolkit (includes equalities in employment issues in schools)
  - Absence Management Procedure & Guidance
- 3.8. We also ensure that a variety of support mechanisms are openly advertised and encouraged, for example the LGBT Mentoring Scheme, BME / LGBT / Disabled Workers Forum and the Brighton & Hove Council Counselling Scheme.
- 3.9. Our staff have undertaken training to help them understand their equality duties and/or the differing needs of protected groups within our community. We have mechanisms in place to identify areas for development. Specific training in relation to dignified and respectful treatment and practise is undertaken during the induction process as is the importance of equality and honesty. There is comprehensive training on behaviour, physical intervention, communication, safeguarding/child & adult protection.

## 4. The roles and responsibilities within our community

### 4.1. Our Executive Headteacher will:

- ensure that staff, parents/carers, learners, visitors and contractors are engaged in the development of and informed about the Equality Policy
- oversee the effective implementation of the policy
- ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement the policy
- develop partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that our actions are in line with the best advice available
- monitor the policy and report to the Governing Body/Board of Trustees at least annually on the effectiveness of the policy and publish this information
- ensure that the Senior Leadership Team is kept up to date with any developments affecting the policy or actions arising from it
- take appropriate action in cases of harassment and discrimination
- in partnership with governors and trustees, deal with breaches of this policy.

### 4.2. Our Governing Body and Board of Trustees will:

- designate a Governor/Trustee with specific responsibility for the Equality Policy
- ensure that the objectives arising from the policy are part of the School and Colleges' Improvement Plans
- support the Headteacher in implementing any actions necessary
- engage with parents and partner agencies about the policy
- evaluate and review the policy annually and the objectives every 4 years.

### 4.3. Our Senior Leadership Team will:

- have responsibility for supporting other staff in implementing this Policy
- provide a lead in the dissemination of information relating to the Policy



- with the Headteacher, provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues
  - assist in implementing reviews of this policy as detailed in the School and Colleges' Improvement Plans.
- 4.4. Our learners will (in the extent that their complex needs facilitate it):
- be involved in the development of the Policy and will understand how it relates to them, appropriate to age and ability
  - be expected to act in accordance with the Policy
  - be encouraged to actively support the Policy.
- 4.5. Our parents/carers will:
- be given accessible opportunities to become involved in the development of the Policy
  - have access to the Policy through a range of different media appropriate to their requirements
  - be encouraged to actively support the Policy
  - be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy
  - be informed of any incident related to this Policy which could directly affect their child.
- 4.6. Our staff will:
- be involved in the development of the Policy
  - be fully aware of the Equality Policy and how it relates to them
  - understand that this is a whole organisation issue and support the Equality Policy
  - model good practice by recognising and challenging prejudice and stereotyping
  - promote equality and avoid discrimination against anyone for reasons of ethnic or national origins, language, culture, religion or belief, disability, gender, sexual orientation or social class.
  - respond to and report any equalities related bullying and incidents in line with our policy
  - make known any queries or training requirements
- 4.7. Relevant voluntary or community groups and partner agencies will:
- be involved in the development of the Policy
  - be encouraged to support the Policy
  - be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy

## 5. Responding to harassment, victimisation and bullying

### 5.1. Definitions of bullying

- 5.1.1. We recognise that hate incidents and prejudice-based bullying behaviour is driven by negative assumptions, stereotypes or misinformation. These are then directed against an individual or group, based on difference (real or perceived), and linked to, for example, racism, transphobia, homophobia, negative views of disabled people or sexism. We will take action to prevent, challenge and eliminate any such behaviour.

5.1.2. Bullying is repeated behaviour by an individual or group which intentionally makes another individual or group feel uncomfortable, threatened or hurt. Bullying is about power. Victims feel powerless to stop it. Others, such as parents for instance, may feel powerless to know how to help.

5.1.3. Bullying can take many forms but may be:

- i. Physical: e.g. hitting, kicking, taking or hiding belongings.
- ii. Verbal: e.g. name calling, teasing, insulting, racist remarks, lack of or misunderstood speech, spreading rumours.
- iii. Non-verbal (direct or indirect): e.g. spreading, excluding from groups, tormenting, staring, threatening gestures.
- iv. Virtual e.g. cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet
- v. A combination of the above: e.g. extortion (forcing someone to give up money or belongings) or intimidation (making someone frightened because of threats).

5.1.4. Any of these may also have contexts that discriminate in relation to race, sex, sexual orientation, SEN, or disability. In Downs View, we have to be particularly aware of the behaviour of people with learning difficulties and/or disorders affecting social behaviour such as ASC.

## 5.2. Definition of 'Prejudice related / hate incidents'

5.2.1. This is a one-off incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on a person's race or perceived race, gender disability, religion and / or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity.

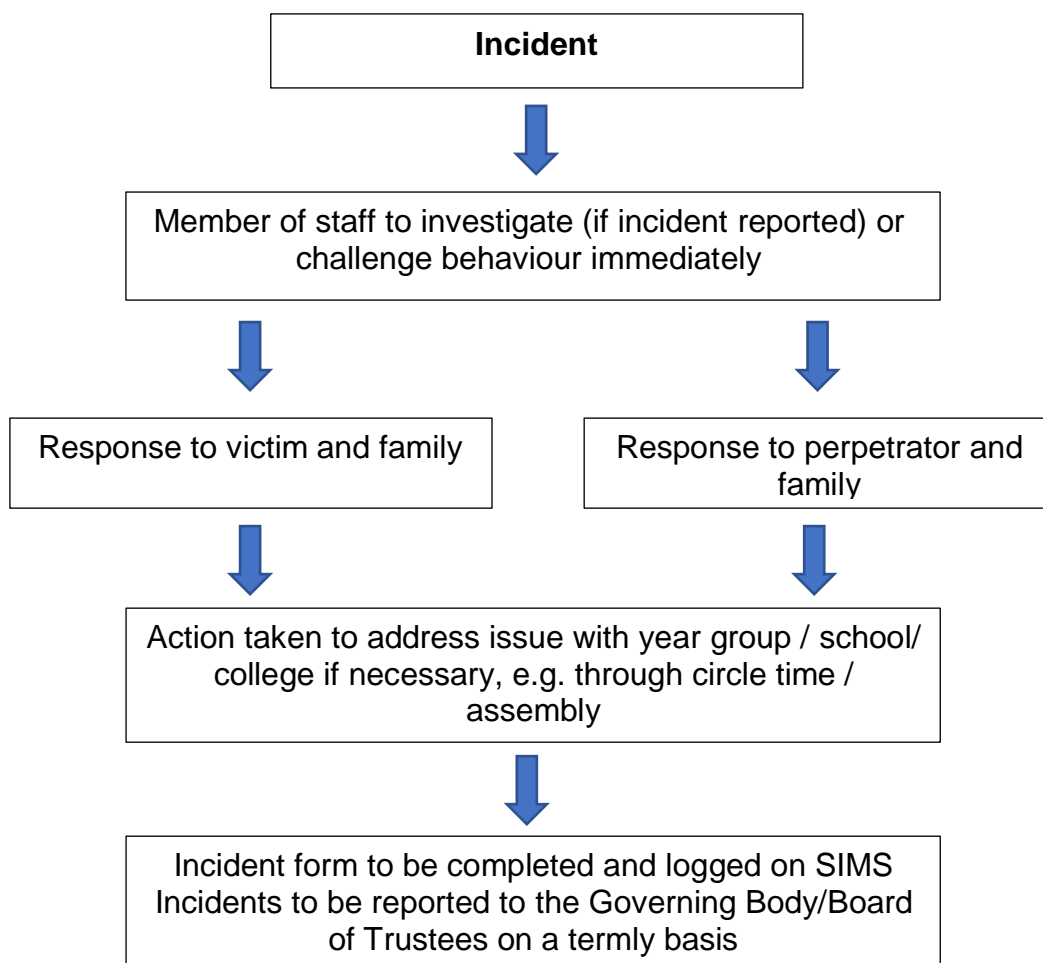
5.2.2. This can also include indirect prejudice driven behaviour that is not targeted at one individual. The impact of this expression of prejudice against an equality group can be damaging and must therefore be responded to as a prejudice related or hate incident.

5.2.3. 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 or gender identity;
- Use of derogatory names, insults and jokes;
- Racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory graffiti;
- Provocative behaviour such as wearing racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or discriminatory badges or insignia;
- Bringing discriminatory material into school or college
- Verbal abuse and threats;
- Incitement of others to discriminate or bully due to victim's race, disability, gender, gender identity 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 gender identity or sexual orientation.

### 5.3. Reporting, recording and responding to prejudiced based bullying and incidents

- 5.3.1. All behaviour and incidents are reported and logged in detail. We have a comprehensive database which documents all behaviour. This is analysed frequently and adjustments made to class or individual programmes.
- 5.3.2. From analysis of this information it is evident that we do not have incidents of bullying (given the nature of the population) but it is still a subject that we regularly discuss to ensure no learner feels that they are a victim.
- 5.3.3. Were there to be an incident, the procedure for responding and reporting is outlined below:



5.3.4. We will record hate incidents and prejudice-based bullying. We will use this information to identify trends and patterns, so that we have approaches in place to provide:

- support for victims and their families
- sanctions and support for perpetrators and their families and
- education for our learners.

5.3.5. In the case of serious incidents, we will support the victim and their family to complete the Brighton & Hove Hate Incident Form and if a crime has been

committed inform and involve the police. The Hate Incident Form can be completed online:

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/report-anti-social-behaviour-or-hate-incident-your-neighbourhood>

## 6. Commissioned services (buying in services)

- 6.1. We are directly responsible for the purchase of goods and services. When buying goods and services from external suppliers, we ask the following questions to help ensure that equality issues and duties are taken into account:
- Could the proposed procurement affect the duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity amongst our community?
  - If so, is there a need to include some equality requirement within the contract and what would this be?
- 6.2. We ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our equality policy. If they were to sub-contract services we would require similar compliance from those subcontractors. We will ensure also that services which we do not procure but which are procured by the local authority on our behalf (e.g. home-school transport) conform to this policy by monitoring their work with us – our learners, parents and staff.

## 7. Involving our community in the development of our Equalities practice

- 7.1. The development of this policy and of our equalities objectives involves the whole Downs View community. We endeavour to involve and listen to a wide range of individuals and groups.
- 7.2. Our learners
- We have elicited the views of learners through the annual review process and our learner councils. The latter uses representatives from groups in danger of potential marginalisation (e.g. pupils with PMLD) and is representative of our diverse population. Parental comments in their survey also reflect the extent to which we meet their child's needs effectively and uniquely in a safe and dignified environment.
- 7.3. Our staff
- Staff have been consulted utilising a comprehensive wellbeing survey which has included follow up actions and changes to practise.
- 7.4. Our Governors and Trustees
- This has been undertaken through their scrutiny of staff practise and our performance data at Governing Body and Board of Trustee meetings.

#### 7.5. Parents/carers

We have consulted parents and carers through our survey mechanism and parent support group meetings which enable us to consult and develop our practise.

#### 7.6. Minority, marginalised and potentially vulnerable groups

We have engaged these groups by speaking with our learners, carrying out the parent surveys and utilising meeting mechanisms. We can utilise software and a translation service to translate common documents and we also engage the translation service for all significant meetings with families whose first language is not English. Our individualised work (at all levels – from teacher to Headteacher) with learners and their families means we can effectively address issues of vulnerable groups.

#### 7.7. Our partners in the community

We take feedback from other groups that use our facilities out of hours and act accordingly. We make visits to other diverse places of worship.

#### 7.8. Ongoing:

We will continue to use the mechanisms defined above.

### 8. How we identify our equalities objectives

8.1. In line with our statutory duties we publish annually equalities information and publish and report on equalities objectives. We have set ourselves specific and measurable objectives that will help us achieve the aims of the general equality duty.

8.2. We will publish our objectives on our websites.

8.3. Our equality objective-setting process has involved gathering evidence as follows:

- i. From the work of the school and college councils
- ii. From the outcome of the staff survey
- iii. From the information in the parent survey
- iv. Our review of cultural opportunities
- v. from the following data:  
Onwards and Upwards and Skills Ladder, Progression Guidance, incident database, parent survey, AR2/TR2 information from learners, advocates.
- vi. From involving relevant people (including disabled people) as described in section 7.

8.4. In the future information gathered from new equality impact assessments will be included<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Equalities Impact Assessments help to review whether what is planned has a differential impact on one more particular group (either positively or negatively). They help us to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against certain individuals or groups and that the positive duties are promoted. They help to ensure we meet the diverse needs of our learners and staff and that diversity, equality and inclusion run through all areas of school and college life.

- 8.5. In addition, we know our school and colleges well because we regularly collect information about ourselves in a variety of ways and other people help us to do this:
- We collect a range of information relating to incidents of harassment and bullying including those relating to racism, homophobia, faith, disability and gender.
  - We use our self-evaluation mechanism to inform our equalities decisions. The current data exposes no issues in relation to vulnerable groups or those with protected characteristics.
  - We value more qualitative information which may be given to us through learner voice mechanisms, less formally or even anonymously (School and College Councils, annual review mechanism & forms – AR2 and TR2).
- 8.6. All members of the Downs View community can contribute to our objectives.
- 8.7. In Brighton & Hove there are a range of services which support the equality agenda and help us to identify our strengths and those areas requiring action. We have particular involvement with: Containers for Africa programme with Fonthill Foundation, Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, AMAZE, Parent Carer Council, Kaleidoscope, Children’s Disability Service, Adult Social Care, Whizz Kids.
- 8.8. We have established good links with our local and our wider community. From them, we learn about equality issues outside school and college and can establish mechanisms for addressing them within Downs View. By listening to those within our community and to our partners, we are able to identify new areas of work, improve existing approaches and focus our energy where it is required. As stated elsewhere we work with our local church and city based temples, local schools and colleges.

## 9. Implementation, monitoring and reviewing

- 9.1. This policy was published in July 2020. It will be actively promoted and disseminated in our induction/admission pack, staff handbook policy section, scheduled meetings and website.
- 9.2. Implementation, monitoring and review are the responsibility of our Senior Leadership Team and our governors and trustees who have agreed and published this policy.
- 9.3. We will report annually on the policy and analyse whether it and related objectives have furthered the aims of the general equality duty.