KEYSTONE ACADEMY TRUST

Pupil Equality Policy

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At Keystone Academy Trust, our policies are shaped by our shared vision of *a flourishing, open-minded and resilient family of schools, inspired by others to live life in all its fullness*. This vision is drawn from John 10:10 - "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." Rooted in the values of integrity, service, resilience and compassion, our policies reflect our commitment to enabling *Stronger Futures for All* and to nurturing the academic, personal and spiritual development of every child and adult in our care. Strengthened by our partnerships with families and communities, each policy provides clarity, consistency and care - supporting inclusive practice, protecting the vulnerable, championing staff wellbeing, and ensuring

strong, ethical leadership across our schools. Together, these policies create a transparent and principled framework that honours the dignity and potential of those we serve while upholding our educational mission and ethos.

Statement of Intent

Keystone Academy Trust understands that under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty all schools have a duty to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between different groups.
- Promote a culture of dignity, respect, fairness and belonging.

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty underpin this policy. The trust is dedicated to ensuring that every pupil receives an education that offers them the best chance at fulfilling their potential. The trust is committed to supporting and celebrating all pupils' individual identities.

The trust will:

- Annually review equality assurance report.
- Consider equality implications when approving policies and planning strategic changes.
- Expect clear oversight of equality, diversity and inclusion at local governance level.
- Support and challenge on equality matters.
- Use key data indicators to understand the needs and characteristics of each school and to monitor the progress of pupils with protected characteristics.
- Promote parental engagement and community cohesion.

Schools will:

- Consider equality implications when creating or personalising policies, making curriculum decisions, reviewing behaviour approaches and planning strategic changes.
- Review equality objectives at least every four years and monitor annually.
- Ensure all staff are aware of, and comply with, current equalities legislation and government recommendations.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and how they can support pupils with protected characteristics and effectively manage any discrimination towards pupils with protected characteristics.
- Provide staff with up-to-date information on the terms, concepts and current understandings relating to each of the protected characteristics.

- Develop appropriate strategies for communication between pupils, their families and school about issues related to a protected characteristic.
- Participate in awareness days that support equality, inclusion, respect and community cohesion, having regard to pupil age, local context and political impartiality requirements. Examples of relevant awareness days include, and are not exclusive to, Black History Month, World Disability Day, and International Women's Day.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- **Equality Act 2010** – the main equality law applying to schools.
- **Human Rights Act 1998** – supports rights such as dignity, respect and freedom from discrimination.
- **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) – places additional duties on publicly funded schools and academy trusts

The Public Sector Equality Duty

Keystone Academy Trust will meet its duty to publish:

- Annual information to demonstrate how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Equality objectives (at least every four years) within each school outlining how the school may further equality.

There are some protected characteristics where statistical data is less likely to be readily available. Pupils will not be pressured into providing information related to any characteristic which they may identify with.

This policy has due regard to statutory and good practice guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE 'Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children'
- DfE 'Gender separation in mixed schools'
- DfE 'Equality Act 2010 and schools'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

- Admissions Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy

Definitions pertaining to unlawful behaviour

The Equality Act defines four kinds of unlawful behaviour – direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; harassment and victimisation.

Direct discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably, because of a protected characteristic, than they treat – or would treat – other people. This describes the most clear-cut and obvious examples of discrimination – for example if a school were to refuse to let a pupil be a member of the school council because she is deaf.

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 when compared to people without that characteristic. An example might be holding a parents' meeting on a Friday evening, which could make it difficult for observant Jewish parents to attend.

Harassment has a specific legal definition in the Act - it is "unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person". This covers unpleasant and bullying behaviour, but potentially extends also to actions which, whether intentionally or unintentionally, cause offence to a person because of a protected characteristic.

Where schools are concerned, the offence of harassment as defined in this way in the Act applies only to harassment because of disability, race, sex or pregnancy and maternity, and not to religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. It is very important to recognise that this does not mean that schools are free to bully or harass pupils on these other grounds - to do so would still be unlawful as well as unacceptable. Any case against the school would be on grounds of direct discrimination rather than harassment.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done ("a protected act") in connection with the Act. A protected act might involve, for example, making an allegation of discrimination or bringing a case under the Act, or supporting another person's complaint by giving evidence or information, but it includes anything that is done under or in connection with the Act. Even if what a person did or said was incorrect or misconceived, for example based on a

misunderstanding of the situation or of what the law provides, they are protected against retaliation unless they were acting in bad faith. The reason for this is to ensure that people are not afraid to raise genuine concerns about discrimination because of fear of retaliation.

Promoting inclusion across Keystone Academy Trust

The trust will promote equality through:

- Ensuring, as far as possible, that the Board of Trustees, the school's Local Governing Board and its staff reflect the diversity of the trust's community.
- Providing an environment where prejudiced assumptions, attitudes and behaviours are continually challenged.
- Communicating this policy to parents to gain their understanding and support for its provisions.

Each school will promote equality through:

- Ensuring that pupils are called by their preferred names, which may be different from their legal names, taking into account the correct spelling, structure and pronunciation.
- Instilling in pupils an awareness of prejudice, giving them confidence that it can, and must, be challenged and eradicated.
- Providing a variety of educational and residential visits that expose pupils to a wide range of cultural experiences.
- Ensuring equal access to opportunities, such as extra-curricular activities and the curriculum.
- Taking care in the use of language and the choice of resources, so that teaching and non-teaching staff avoid reinforcing stereotypical views.
- Valuing the cultural experiences and contributions of all pupils, regardless of any protected characteristic that they may have.
- Discussing equality issues as an agenda item for the school council.
- Promoting equality of opportunity within the wider society.
- Ensuring admission arrangements will not unfairly disadvantage a pupil with a protected characteristic.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees will:

- Ensure the trust complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations.
- Ensure all policies are developed and implemented with due consideration to appropriate equality impact assessments.

- Ensure that all strategic decisions consider equality impacts.
- Monitor compliance and review equality objectives.

School leaders will:

- Implement and champion this policy, ensuring that all staff (including volunteers), pupils and their families apply its guidelines fairly in all situations.
- Facilitate regular awareness raising/training sessions to ensure all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities, as well as to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Reflect on the present school community and respond to previously reported incidents in order to improve procedures and practices
- Ensure that appropriate support is made available for pupils and their families who require immediate intervention.
- Act as a role model for equality, diversity and inclusion across the school community, promoting positive relationships, challenging prejudice and treating pupils and their families and staff fairly.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure pupils and prospective pupils will not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised in relation to:
  - admissions,
  - the way a school provides education for pupils,
  - how pupils are provided with access to any benefit, facility or service,
  - the suspension or permanent exclusion of a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

Staff and governors will:

- Be alert to the possible harassment and/or discrimination of pupils, both inside and outside of school, and to deal with incidents as the highest priority.
- Carry out their statutory duties relating to equal opportunities and inclusivity and pertaining to their specific roles.
- Have due regard to the sensitivities of all pupils and not provide material or speak and/or act in ways that may cause offence.
- Act as a role model for equality, diversity and inclusion across the school community, promoting positive relationships, challenging prejudice and treating pupils and their families and each other fairly.

Protected Characteristics for Primary School Pupils

The term “protected characteristics” is used as a convenient way to refer to the personal characteristics to which the law applies.

The trust and its staff (including volunteers) must not discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil or a person associated with the pupil by treating them less favourably because of their:

- (age – see * below)
- sex
- race
- disability
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- (marriage and civil partnership – see ** below)

This includes discriminating because of a characteristic which they are believed to have, even if the belief is mistaken.

* A person's age is also a protected characteristic, but age as a protected characteristic does not apply to pupils in schools. Schools therefore remain free to admit and organise children in age groups and to treat pupils in ways appropriate to their age and stage of development without risk of legal challenge.

** Marriage and civil partnership is not a protected characteristic applicable to pupils nor is it applicable in school admissions, education provision or exclusions; however, schools should display a commitment to respecting family structures.

Sex

For the purpose of this policy, the protected characteristic of sex relates to biological sex.

Staff will ensure that pupils of one sex are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to pupils of the other sex. Pupils will be offered equal opportunities to undertake any activity in a school.

There may be occasions where it is deemed necessary to teach some subjects in single-sex classes, for example, the topic of puberty and the use of sanitary items in PSHE units, or sporting activities in P.E. Here, schools will ensure that such classes do not give pupils a disadvantage when compared to pupils of the other sex in other classes.

Pupils' age and stage of development will be taken into consideration when making decisions relating to competitive sport, physical education and changing arrangements. Decisions will have regard to safety, fairness, safeguarding and applicable legal requirements.

Both sexes will have equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities; where separation is deemed necessary, the single-sex sports teams will receive the same quality and amount of resources.

Where single-sex classes are provided, decisions concerning pupils with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment will be considered individually, taking account of safeguarding responsibilities, the Equality Act 2010, the rights of all pupils, educational needs and current government guidance.

Race

Staff and volunteers will ensure that pupils of all races and ethnicities are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

Staff will ensure pupils with English as an Additional Language are treated equally and fairly, while ensuring they are supported at all times.

The trust will not segregate pupils on the basis of their race or ethnicity, understanding that claims of 'separate but equal' will not be tolerated, and that such actions will always be viewed as direct discrimination.

Disability

Staff will ensure that pupils with disabilities are not singled out or treated less favourably than other pupils simply because they have a disability, which includes any mental health issue, regularly reviewing practices to ensure they are fair.

Schools will avoid implementing rules that could have an adverse effect on pupils with disabilities (for example, by making physical fitness a basis for admission, or asking all pupils to deliver a presentation, as this could be unfair towards pupils with anxiety), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving a legitimate aim.

Staff will ensure that they do not discriminate against pupils with disabilities because of something which is a consequence of their disability (for example, by not allowing a pupil in a wheelchair outside at break time because it would take too long for them to get in and out), unless it is for a legitimate reason and is a proportionate way of achieving a legitimate aim.

Each school will make any reasonable adjustments and provide any auxiliary aids necessary to ensure the full inclusion of pupils with disabilities, especially where the pupil also has SEND but does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Each school will meet its duty to undertake accessibility planning for pupils with disabilities and ensure that an Accessibility Plan is published on their website, implemented and reviewed where necessary.

Each school will adhere to the trust's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for pupils with SEND.

Religion or belief

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because of their religion or belief.

Each school will ensure that pupils are provided with the appropriate space in which they can practice their faith, for example, to perform their daily prayers.

Absences in relation to religious observances will be handled in accordance with the trust's Attendance Policy. Schools will liaise with local religious leaders of all faiths to inform the amount of leave pupils will be granted in relation to religious observance.

Sexual Orientation

Staff will ensure that all gay, lesbian and bisexual pupils, or the children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents, are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

Each school will ensure that pupils are taught about the nature of marriage, including same-sex marriage, families, relationships, and sexual orientation by presenting the facts of English and Welsh law.

Staff will ensure that any religious beliefs with regards to sexual orientation are taught to pupils in an educational context, and in a manner that is not prejudicial or discriminatory. Staff will not offer personal opinions when discussing relationships: they will inform pupils in an age-appropriate and legally accurate manner through RSHE.

Schools will support gay, lesbian and bisexual pupils and ensure that they are treated with dignity, respect and free from discrimination.

Gender Reassignment

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably in relation to gender reassignment, for example, because they are trans or have trans parents, siblings or other family members. The trust recognises that gender reassignment does not necessarily involve physical change and can be solely social and emotional.

Schools will ensure that there are suitable toilet and changing facilities for pupils to use, including:

- Single-sex toilets and changing facilities.
- Non-specific-sex (private) toilet and changing facilities.

The facilities will be made available to all pupils. Single-sex spaces must be protected. Pupils use the facility pertaining to their biological sex or a non-specific-sex facility. Consideration must be given to dignity, respect, anti-bullying measures, protection from discrimination, and safeguarding.

Schools will consider requests regarding presentation, dress and personal identity on an individual basis, having regard to safeguarding, the Equality Act 2010, the rights of all pupils and current government guidance.

Schools will support trans pupils and ensure that they are treated with dignity, respect and free from discrimination.

Marriage and civil partnership

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are associated with a parent, carer or family member who is married or in a civil partnership. Schools will promote an inclusive environment that respects the diversity of family structures represented within the school community.

Schools will ensure that references to marriage and civil partnership within the curriculum, school communications and wider school life are factual, balanced and consistent with English law. All pupils and families will be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect, regardless of their family circumstances, and any discrimination, harassment or prejudicial behaviour will be challenged and addressed appropriately.

Looked-after Children (LAC)

LAC and previously LAC (PLAC) will be given the highest priority for admissions, as per the requirements of the Admissions Policy.

Staff will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are looked after, or have previously been looked after, by the state.

A personal education plan will be created with input from the child's local authority and implemented for all LAC and PLAC, to ensure that their education and development needs are fully covered, including appropriate transition and catch-up support to ensure that they do not fall behind.

Staff will ensure that any special educational needs or disabilities that LAC or PLAC have are duly taken into account and addressed, whether this is with or without an EHCP.

Schools with a religious character

Schools with a religious character (commonly known as faith schools) have certain exceptions to the religion or belief provisions which allow them to discriminate because of religion or belief in relation to admissions and in access to any benefit, facility or service.

The Curriculum

A school's curriculum must reflect modern British society. By doing so, it will promote respect for different backgrounds and beliefs. Through a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils are taught about equality, respect and protected characteristics in an age-appropriate way. Through its teaching, a school will challenge stereotypes and prejudice.

To ensure equality, diversity and acceptance are taught and promoted throughout each subject area, schools will:

- ensure that through relationships with other schools, pupils and their families and staff see the school as part of a large, diverse community.
- ensure that through the curriculum, literature and other teaching resources, all groups are represented fairly and without stereotype.
- aim to be fully inclusive, valuing every individual's ideas and contributions. The PHSE scheme *Jigsaw* aims to help pupils really know and value who they are and understand how they relate to other people in an ever-changing world.

The observation of inclusive teaching strategies will remain a key element of the monitoring and evaluating schedule.

Each school will respect the right of parents to withdraw their child from sex education. The criteria and process for this is outlined in each school's *Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy.*

Pupils that have left school

Each school's responsibility to not discriminate, harass or victimise will not end when a pupil has left the school. It will continue to apply with regard to subsequent actions related to the previous relationship with the pupil.

Bullying

The issue of bullying motivated by prejudice is a particularly sensitive issue. Although the relationship between one pupil and another is not within the scope of the Act and therefore this policy, schools need to ensure that all forms of prejudice-motivated bullying are taken seriously and dealt with equally and firmly.

The Department for Education has published specific guidance on bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying and bullying related to sexual orientation, transgender, disability, race and religion. This is available on GOV.UK.

The Anti-bullying Policy will be used in conjunction with this policy in order to prevent, and effectively deal with, any discriminatory incidents.

The headteacher will decide whether it is appropriate to notify social services and/or the police of any incident.

Concerns with regards to the handling of bullying and discrimination incidents will be dealt with via the procedures outlined in the Concerns and Complaints Policy.