

EQUALITY POLICY

Responsible	Chief People Officer
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Approval date	March 2020
Date for review	March 2023
Date for further review	March 2026

POLICY

Purpose

To confirm Better Futures Multi Academy Trust's commitment to equality for all students and staff.

Scope

This policy applies to Better Future's Multi-Academy Trust which will be referred to as BFMAT for the purposes of the policy.

This overarching policy statement will be supported by an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy for each academy ('College') within the Trust based its local context.

This policy encompasses the following protected characteristics:

- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
 - Marriage and civil partnership
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Equality Statement

Equality, freedom and treating all persons with dignity and respect are fundamental human rights. As such, BFMAT is committed to making these central in all its work.

A diverse student body and workforce benefit BFMAT's role as a provider of high-quality education and employment in a modern and ever-changing society.

BFMAT is firmly committed to the promotion of equality and will not unlawfully discriminate, or tolerate discrimination (direct or indirect, harassment or victimisation) on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010. This includes discrimination by association or due to perception. This policy will operate in furtherance of this.

All trustees, governors, staff and students across the Trust are required to develop an appropriate understanding of, and act in accordance with, the Trust's Overarching Equality Policy and the local Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy at their setting.

All visitors to the each of the colleges within the Trust including volunteers, parents and carers, contractors are expected to support our commitment to equalities and comply with the duties set out in this policy. We will provide guidance and information to enable them to do this.

The Policy

1. Introduction

This policy requires that all individuals working, studying or visiting the Trust/ any college within the Trust:

- Have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description.
- Are treated fairly and with respect in all interactions with the Trust and its colleges
- Are not discriminated (either directly or indirectly) against or suffer any unwanted behaviour because of a protected characteristic.
- Have an equal chance to achieve their full potential, irrespective of any defining features that may give rise to direct or indirect discrimination.

The Trust does not tolerate any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination.

2. Our Principles

Our approach to equality is based on the following key principles:

- All members of our Trust Community are of equal value and shall be enabled to develop to their full potential.
- We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength.
- We foster positive attitudes and relationships and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging.
- We observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development.
- We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist.
- We aim to support social justice and social mobility preparing students for life in a diverse society.

Through its ethos and processes, BFMAT will ensure that all students and employees overcome challenges, thrive and succeed.

We will provide training, guidance and information to enable all within our Trust community to play their part in the implementation of this policy.

3. The Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). This means that no-one should be discriminated against or treated less favourably because of their sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy or maternity, age, marriage and civil partnerships.

The Act requires all public organisations, including Academy Trusts, to have due regard of the need to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and two specific duties:

The Public Sector Equality Duty or “general duty” requires all public organisations, including Academy Trusts, to

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those that share a protected characteristic and those that do not.
- Foster good relations between different groups.

The two “specific duties” requires all public organisations, including Academy Trusts, to:

- Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty.
- Publish Equality objectives at least every 4 years which are specific and measurable.

We understand from time-to-time further legislation and guidance is published by Government and relevant legal bodies and we will continually monitor and implement relevant policy and practice to ensure compliance.

We believe that the Equality Act 2010 provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups.

4. Complying with our Equalities Duties

BFMAT has due regard for the public sector equality duty in relation to the protected characteristics outlined above.

4.1 Eliminate discrimination

BFMAT will take clear actions that will redress any harassment (defined by us as verbal, emotional or physical attacks) and victimisation (defined by us as being singled out to be intentionally harmed) of young people or adults that has changed their ability to function within BFMAT in the usual way. This includes discrimination by association or due to perception.

4.2 Advance equality of opportunity

The principle underlying the notion of equality of opportunity is that treating people equally does not necessarily involve treating them all the same, but that the Equality Act 2010 requires that account should be taken of people’s differing experiences, needs and histories, and of the differing challenges and barriers which they may face. To have due regard for advancing equality of opportunity may entail engaging in positive action.

BFMAT believes that this is the responsibility of every member of the whole Trust community to “narrow the gaps” (theirs and/or other peoples) in order to make progress socially, emotionally and academically.

All employees, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for 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.

4.3 Foster good relations

BFMAT recognises that in order to have to fulfil its aim to eliminate discrimination and to foster good relations it will involve the need to tackle prejudice and to promote understanding.

BFMAT will draw on and emphasise the common purposes within it in order to support, develop and achieve harmonious relationships across the whole school community.

4.4 Our Strategic Aims

As a whole Trust we aim to:

- **Raise Awareness and improve understanding:**
By ensuring that all members of the college community have the knowledge and understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion as part of a diverse organisation.
- **Promote Openness and offer support:**
By creating safe spaces and support networks for staff and students with protected characteristics, listening to the staff and student voice and highlight the size and scale of this challenge.
- **Address the gap between policy and practice:**
By ensuring leadership teams and individuals in key positions across the Trust are working with critical friends/ external experts to ensure that equality, diversity & inclusion is at the forefront of everything that we do.
- **Level the playing field:**
By addressing the reality of conscious and unconscious bias, accepting the reality that things are not fair or equal and take positive action to address gaps in experience and outcomes.
- **Integrate equality, diversity and inclusion into the student experience:**
By ensuring our environment and provision attracts, engages and supports students of all backgrounds and identities, with inclusive teaching that allows students to bring their unique identity into all aspects of college life.

5. Equality Objectives

5.1 Each college within the Trust has its own bespoke set of equality objectives which take account of its local context and priorities based on the community it serves.

5.2 At **Trust level**, the following **Equality Objectives for 2022-2023** have been identified:

1. We will undertake a detailed review of all data supporting the Equalities Policy and related policies and identify the core data for:
 - a. The Trust
 - b. Each college
2. We will take action to eradicate any instances of prejudice-related bullying in relation to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010 by ensuring that there is an open culture of reporting and that every case is thoroughly investigated and restorative approaches used to bring about behaviour changes.
3. We will take action to ensure we are an employer of choice with an active recruitment policy to recruit from under-represented groups and develop our equality profile of all staff to help us understand and address key equality issues in our workforce.
4. We will monitor levels of student engagement across the Trust in all aspects of College-life (especially the most disadvantaged) to ensure equity and fairness in access and engagement.

6. Publishing Information

- 6.1. BFMAT is required by law to publish information which demonstrates compliance with the equalities duties and also to prepare and publish specific and measurable objectives.
- 6.2. In order to fulfil this obligation academies within the Trust will collect data related to the protected characteristics outlined above and analyse this data.
- 6.3. The data collected will continue to determine our focus for our equality objectives
- 6.4. Statistical equality information and the equality objectives across the Trust will be published and available on the BFMAT website

7. Monitoring and reviewing the policy

The Trust Board annually evaluates the success of the Trust's equalities work and will review the whole policy every three years.