



## **Equality Policy**

Tees Valley Education Trust

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## **1 INTRODUCTION TO THE EQUALITY POLICY**

Promoting equality means treating people fairly, valuing differences and removing the barriers that prevent people from fully participating in everyday life and realising their full potential. Over recent years, society in general has worked extremely hard to reduce inequality. Yet we know that people still experience disadvantage and unfair treatment simply because of who they are or the background they come from.

Tees Valley Education (TVE) is committed to taking positive action that will open up the curriculum and its associated activities, services and opportunities to everyone, to ensure that difference and diversity is embraced, and that people are always treated fairly and with respect.

This Policy sets out the key principles of equality that will guide the way in which we make decisions, provide services, recruit and support our employees, work with other organisations, and involve local people. It will be supported by strategies and action plans that set out the objectives and activities that will ensure we meet our Equality Duty. These documents are referred to throughout this Policy, and can be viewed by requesting a copy from the Executive Principal or Head of Academy, or in the case of some documents, our website or websites of other responsible bodies.

## **2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Tees Valley Education is committed to ensuring equality, fairness, inclusion and good relations are at the heart of everything we do, be it policy-making, service delivery or employment practice. This will be key to delivering our vision for our academies to ensure that:

‘Every child and young person should leave our care able to live healthily, enjoying safe, happy and fulfilling lives, and with a desire to continue learning, expand their horizons and realise their ambitions and aspirations.’

Our work will be guided by the guidance and codes of practice published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and informed by the Equalities Framework for Local Government. We will share best practice through regular Leadership and Team Meetings.

Our commitment to promoting equality is reflected in the values that guide the way in which we plan and deliver services:

- Openness, fairness and accountability
- Involving and listening to our citizens
- Valuing our people
- Continuous improvement

## **3 LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Tees Valley Education will meet all of its Legal Duties in respect of equality and diversity. The key piece of legislation is the Equality Act 2010, which came into effect in October 2010. It replaces and consolidates all of the anti-discrimination laws with one single Act, and has implications for Tees Valley Education as an employer and a service provider.

The Act contains a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires all public bodies and private bodies that deliver a public function, to consider the needs of diverse groups when designing and delivering services. Under the Act, Tees Valley Education academies must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to protected characteristics;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low;
- Tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between different communities.

Tees Valley Education must also comply with the conventions contained within the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that individuals in the UK have access to.

The following websites provide useful information about Equality and Human Rights:

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities)

[www.acas.co.uk](http://www.acas.co.uk)

#### **4 WHO DOES THE EQUALITY POLICY PROTECT?**

The TVE Equality Policy has taken the legal requirements placed upon public bodies straight from the Equality Act 2010. The Act protects people on the grounds of specified “protected characteristics” listed below:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability and caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment (transgender)
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity/paternity leave (including adoptive parents)
- Religion, belief or faith
- Race or ethnicity
- Marital status or civil partnership

We also recognise that one of the main factors that contribute to inequality is poverty. Indeed, poverty can often have a disproportionate impact on protected groups. We have therefore broadened the scope of our

equality work to encompass social, income or housing circumstances. Within the TVE trust, pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium and/or Free School Meals is an indicator used to help us analyse our work in this area.

## **5 RESPONSIBILITY FOR EQUALITIES**

Equality is the responsibility of every member of the Trust Board and employee of Tees Valley Education, as well as organisations who provide services on behalf of Tees Valley Education.

Our parents and carers also have a responsibility to treat our staff with dignity and respect, and to tell us if they require assistance or adjustments to enable them to access our services. We can only help if we are informed help is needed.

Overall responsibility for ensuring that our decisions are compliant with equality legislation lies with Tees Valley Education Trust Board, who will be supported by the Executive Principal and Senior Leadership Team, to whom they may delegate the day to day management of this area of work. We will follow a robust process to ensure we consciously think about the three aims of the equality duty as part of our decision-making process. This is evidenced in the minutes of meetings, in particular our Trust Board meetings.

All Staff have a professional responsibility to keep up to date with equalities legislation by attending training events organised by the academy or Local Authority or recognised training provider.

Our Academy Councils have incorporated the equalities agenda within its scope of work, ensuring equality is built into everything we do as an organisation from a child's point of view. Progress in relation to achieving our agreed Equality Objectives will be monitored through the Tees Valley Education Executive Principal's/Headteacher's termly report to the Trust Board.

## **6 MAKING FAIR DECISIONS**

Every day, decisions are made within Tees Valley Education academies that affect the lives and relationships of pupils, families and its employees.

Equality Analysis will be used when required as a tool to help us make fair, sound and transparent decisions that are based on a robust understanding of the needs and rights of the groups and individuals who may be affected. We will seek advice from our Trust Board or Human Resources Advisor when this process needs to be formally undertaken. When advised that we should do so, the TVE Trust Board will then make use of the Act and other legislation to ensure that equality analysis is exercised in substance, with rigour and an open mind in such a way that influences the final decision. It will also be used to identify positive actions that will mitigate any negative effects of our decision, or enhance any benefits for protected groups and others at risk of disadvantage.

## **7 COLLATING, ANALYSING AND REPORTING ON EQUALITY INFORMATION**

We will collate, analyse and publish information about equality and diversity in the workforce, service delivery and where appropriate our communities. This will be used to help us develop and monitor equality objectives, inform our service planning and decision making, identify ways of improving performance and demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty. This will be achieved via the School Census, data returns and academy monitoring procedures.

Each academy will provide a link on its website to an official government data source, allowing members of the public to view a Local Area Report, detailing the characteristics of people and households in the community. [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

We use this information to adjust future teaching and learning plans, as necessary. Resources are available to support groups of pupils where the information suggests that progress is not as good as it should be. The Trust Board receives regular updates on pupil performance information.

Academy performance information is compared to national data and Local Authority data, to ensure that pupils are making appropriate progress when compared to all schools, and to schools/academies in similar circumstances.

As well as monitoring pupil performance information, we also regularly monitor a range of other information. This relates to:

- Exclusions and truancy
- Incidents of racism, disability, sexist incidents and all forms of bullying;
- Parental involvement
- Participation in extra curriculum activities
- Attendance

Our monitoring activities enable us to identify any differences in pupil performance. This allows us to take appropriate action to meet the needs of specific groups and to set targets in our strategic plan, in order to make the necessary improvements.

We may routinely ask staff, career applicants and service-users to provide information about their personal characteristics. This will only be done where the information is relevant to the aims of the equality duty – for example if there are known inequalities in relation to a particular outcome or service. Tees Valley Education will always make it clear that disclosure of sensitive information is optional. However, without gathering some form of evidence, it may be difficult to monitor the impact of policies and procedures on certain protected groups. Tees Valley Education will endeavour to overcome this by creating a culture of trust whereby individuals are comfortable disclosing such information. Whenever we ask for equality information, we will explain why the information is needed, how it will be used, and how we will ensure that privacy will be protected.

Tees Valley Education will uphold its duty to protect an individual's right to privacy, and will not publish information that could identify an individual. Nor will the information be used to identify an individual or make a decision about them purely on the grounds of the information that has been provided in relation to their protected characteristics. All personal data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection principles and in compliance with our Data Protection Notification with the Information Commissioner. Further details are included within the Tees Valley Education Data Protection Guidance.

## **8 MAKING OUR SERVICES ACCESSIBLE AND EASY TO USE**

We constantly strive to deliver services that are easily accessible by all who need them, and to support people to participate in public life. This in turn will help us achieve our duty to foster good relations between

different groups and individuals. We are committed to having conversations with members of the community, staff and children to develop an understanding of how we can break down barriers and better meet their needs. This may involve making adjustments to the way we deliver services where it is reasonable to do so. Relevant actions are detailed within our School Improvement Plans or teachers curriculum planning.

Through our School Improvement Plan we will make our activities and services more accessible and inclusive, and encourage people from diverse backgrounds to come together to identify and tackle local issues.

We will make sure that everyone has the information they need about our services through our Core Inclusion Offer, which is published on our own website and on Local Authority websites. We will actively seek the views of relevant stakeholders about Tees Valley Education academies, and the services we provide, as well as involving them in shaping services, curriculum delivery and decision making.

We actively support those who find it difficult to express themselves (for example children or parents who have physical, sensory or learning disabilities will be supported when a questionnaire is used).

All TVE academies provide visitors with full accessibility information to make visiting our sites an enjoyable experience. Staff can also offer guided assistance, where required. All staff and children requiring extra support in and around our academies have a Personal and Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

## **9 ADVANCING EQUALITY THROUGH THE CURRICULUM**

All Tees Valley Education academies will ensure that:

- Planning reflects our commitment to equality in all subject areas and cross curricular themes promote positive attitudes to equality and diversity.
- Pupils will have opportunities to explore concepts and issues relating to identity and equality.
- All steps are taken to ensure that all pupils have access to mainstream curriculum by taking into account the cultural and lifestyle backgrounds of all pupils, their linguistic needs are taken into account and their learning styles are considered.

### **9.1 Teaching and Learning**

We aim to provide all our pupils with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement. To do this, teaching and learning will:

- Ensure quality of access for all pupils and prepare them for life in a diverse society;
- Promote attitudes and values that will challenge discriminatory behaviour;
- Provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and religions and celebrate the diversity of other cultures;
- Use a range of teaching strategies when teaching about different cultural and religious traditions;
- Develop pupils' advocacy skills so that they can detect bias, challenge discrimination, leading to justice and equality;
- Ensure that the PSHE and Citizenship curriculum cover issues of equalities, diversity, religion, human rights and inclusion;

- Seek to involve all parents in supporting their child’s education;
- Provide educational visits and extra-curricular activities that involve all pupil groupings;
- Take account of the performance of all pupils when planning for future learning and settling challenging targets;
- Make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of pupils;
- Identify resources that support staff development.

## 9.2 Learning Environment

There is a consistently high expectation of all pupils regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability or social background. All pupils are encouraged to improve on their own achievements and not to measure themselves against others. Parents are also encouraged to view their own children’s achievements in this light.

To secure the desired outcomes we recognise:

- Teacher enthusiasm is a vital factor in achieving a high level of motivation and good results from all pupils. We will use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, without stereotyping. All subject departments, where appropriate, promote and celebrate the contribution of different minority groups to the subject matter. Adults in the academy will try to provide good, positive role models in their approach to all issues relating to equality of opportunity.
- The academy will place a very high priority on the provision for special educational needs and disability. We will meet all pupils’ learning needs, including the more able, by carefully assessed and administered programmes of work.
- The academy must provide an environment in which all pupils have equal access to all facilities and resources.
- All pupils are to be encouraged to be actively involved in their own learning. A range of teaching methods are to be used throughout the academy to ensure that effective learning takes place at all stages for all pupils.

## 9.3 Ethos and Atmosphere

At Tees Valley Education we are aware that those involved in the leadership of the academy community are instrumental in demonstrating mutual respect between all. There should be an openness of atmosphere which welcomes everyone to the academy. The children are encouraged to greet visitors to the academy with friendliness and respect. The displays around the academy are of a high quality and reflect diversity across all aspects of equality of opportunity and are frequently monitored.

Physical access to all Tees Valley Academies is restricted by a number of security measures to help protect and safeguard children and staff. Vehicular access to a safe parking space can be easily arranged for disabled visitors; access arrangements are clearly displayed and communicated with disabled visitors upon arrival. Assisted support around each academy can be arranged.

Provision is made to cater for the spiritual needs of all the children through planning of assemblies, classroom based and externally based activities.



#### 9.4 Resources and Materials

The provision of good quality resources and materials within Tees Valley Education academies is a high priority. These resources should:

- Reflect the reality of an ethnically, culturally and sexual diverse society;
- Reflect a variety of viewpoints; Show positive images of males and females in society including people with disabilities; they should not include explicitly and implicitly racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist materials.

#### 9.5 Language

We recognise that it is important that all members of the academy community use appropriate language which:

- Does not transmit or confirm stereotypes;
- Does not offend;
- Creates and enhances positive images of particular groups identified at the beginning of this document;
- Creates the conditions for all people to develop their self-esteem;
- Uses correct terminology in referring to particular groups or individuals e.g. Inuit rather Eskimo, Native Americans rather than Red Indians;
- Use, when possible, first language effectively for learning.

#### 9.6 Extra-Curricular Provision

It is the policy of all Tees Valley Education academies to provide equal access to all activities from an early age e.g. girls playing football, boys playing netball and mixed teams wherever possible. We also provide equality of access to breakfast and after school clubs.

We undertake responsibility for making contributors to extra-curricular activities aware of the academies commitment to equality of opportunity (e.g. volunteers and external providers). We work to ensure that all such non-staff members who have contact with children adhere to these guidelines.

#### 9.7 Personal Development and Pastoral Guidance

Pupils, staff, parents/carers will be offered support, as appropriate, as soon as they have made it known that in their view, an act of discrimination has taken place. We also recognise that the perpetrators of discrimination are themselves sometimes victims of their personal circumstances, and therefore where appropriate remedial work is done to ensure that the actions do not occur again. Positive role models are used when the opportunity arises throughout the academy to ensure that different groups of pupils can see themselves reflected in the academy community.

Emphasis is placed on the value that diversity brings to the academy community rather than the challenges.

## 9.8 Staffing and Staff Development

We recognise the need for positive role models and distribution of responsibility among staff. Where possible, this will include pupil's access to a balance of male and female staff at each key stage, although the Trust Board recognises that workforce staffing restrictions may not always allow this.

We undertake to encourage the career development and aspirations of all individuals.

It is Tees Valley Education policy to provide staff with training and development, which will increase awareness of the needs of different groups of pupils in the various dimensions of equality of opportunity.

We will agree clear and challenging objectives in our School Improvement Plan that will focus our efforts on improving the lives of children at risk of inequality, exclusion and lower than expected attainment. These state what we want to achieve, and are supported by clear actions and measures of performance. The objectives are included within Tees Valley Education's strategic planning document: the School Improvement Plan and RAD. They will also be included in other emerging issues / Leadership Team plans and other key documents. This will ensure that equality is an integral part of our day-to-day business planning and activities.

Progress towards achieving these objectives will be monitored as part of Tees Valley Education's Performance Management systems.

## **10 EMPLOYMENT – SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING TVE EMPLOYEES**

Tees Valley Education will treat all of its staff, and anyone who applies to work or volunteer for us, fairly and equally. Tees Valley Education expects the same level of commitment and professionalism towards equality between all TVE colleagues.

Our employment practice is guided by the principles of equality and fairness. This includes recruitment, terms and conditions, appraisals, learning and development, career promotion and when ending employment. Our activities and approach to achieving this are available via our Human Resources Team located at TVE Head Office.

We want our staff to reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve, and will ensure we follow guidance from Human Resources and GOV.UK when we recruit, that may include taking steps to encourage applications from groups who we know are under-represented in our workforce.

All employees should be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace. Tees Valley Education will not tolerate bullying and harassment in any form, and the Whistleblowing and Raising Staff Concerns Policy sets out how individual members of staff might raise concerns they have about actions taking place within the workplace. It specifically covers issues around bullying and harassment; grievances and whistle blowing.

Employees from protected groups will be supported and encouraged to organise their own interest groups where they can meet to share information, raise concerns and raise awareness.

We will adopt a range of methods to ensure an inclusive approach to engaging with staff about issues that affect them. This may include trade unions, team meetings, use of the internet, staff surveys, focus groups and written communication.

## **11 WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

All Tees Valley Education academies will use their role as a beacon within the community to promote equality in partnership working with public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations.

Through our collaborative work with Local Strategic Partnerships within the two Boroughs (Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland) we will work through the Partnership to protect people from unfair treatment and disadvantages, to remove barriers that prevent people from accessing services, progressing and achieving in life, and to support local people to build strong positive relationships between and within their communities. The Stronger Communities Partnership will champion equalities and ensure that information, experience and best practice is shared.

Tees Valley Education procures a wide range of goods, services and works from third party suppliers. As part of our procurement process, wherever possible TVE will source suppliers and contractors that confirm their compliance and commitment to all legal obligations in relation to Equality and Diversity. It is the responsibility of the TVE Director of Finance & Corporate Services to ensure that procurement activities ensure equality is embedded into all aspects of the process, from writing specifications to contract management. Tees Valley Education's Scheme of Delegation is available within the Academy, upon request.

## **12 PROTECTING PEOPLE**

Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults is everybody's business, wherever they work and whatever they do for Tees Valley Education. This includes staff, volunteers and people who work for organisations that provide services on behalf of Tees Valley Education. We will endeavour to ensure all staff and elected members are trained in Safeguarding Awareness. The Tees-wide Inter-agency Policy, Procedure and Practice Guidance is used to assist staff of all agencies in working together to identify and support adults who may be vulnerable to abuse and/or mistreatment.

Tees Valley Education has an absolute commitment to the well-being of children and young people. Our anti-bullying policy aims to reduce incidents of bullying that involve children and young people, and to encourage children, young people and adults to show respect and consideration for others. The Local Safeguarding Children Boards are responsible for agreeing how organisations co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and ensure the effectiveness of what they do. More information, including policies and procedures to safeguard children and young people to be followed by staff are published on the LSCB website.

We will continue to work with our partners to tackle domestic and sexual violence, and will implement our part in the Local Authority Partnership Domestic and Sexual Violence Reduction Strategy to ensure that all residents in the Borough have a fundamental right to live their lives in an environment which will not tolerate domestic violence, will support victims/survivors and will hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. Within all Tees Valley Education academies, this has included specific works with groups of pupils, and on an individual basis, where necessary.

Tees Valley Education is also committed to working in partnership to ensure that hate crime is not tolerated within our communities and neighbourhoods. Hate crime is motivated because of prejudice, hostility or hatred towards a person, family or groups because of their sexuality, gender identity, disability, ethnicity,

religion or faith. It can include physical attacks to either a person or their property, threats, verbal abuse and insults. Nobody should suffer because of who they are, and nobody should tolerate being victimised. Through the planned curriculum and when opportunities arise we will tackle incidents as well as raise awareness of hate crime, encourage victims to report incidents, support known victims and take actions against offenders as necessary.

### **13 ASSOCIATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE**

In addition to the many documents referred to within this policy, Tees Valley Education has in place a range of policies, procedures, strategies and guidance that have an important role in ensuring we are meeting the needs of, and advancing equality for protected groups. These are detailed within each academy School Improvement Plan and RAD.

The following websites provide useful information about Equality and Human Rights:

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities)

[www.acas.co.uk](http://www.acas.co.uk)

[www.GOV.UK](http://www.GOV.UK)

### **14 ACTION PLAN AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

Equality objectives for each TVE academy are incorporated within strategic planning documents: the School Improvement Plan and RAD. All staff will contribute and have access to the SIP and RAD. These documents can be obtained from each TVE academy, upon request.

Each academy must publish its own 3 year Accessibility Plan on their website.

### **15 EQUALITY OBJECTIVES STATEMENT**

Each TVE academy will publish its equality objectives on the academy website. This will be reviewed and updated at least once every 4 years.