

SAET Equality and Diversity Policy

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1. Policy statement and principles

The Severn Academies Educational Trust (SAET) is committed to advancing and achieving equality of opportunity for all students, parents /carers / associated persons, staff, governors and visitors. We believe that all people are of equal value and are entitled to equality of opportunity and that our diversity enriches our community.

SAET works hard to widen participation and involvement in community, national and international activities and to engage as many students and parents/carers as possible in celebrating a wide diversity of cultures and experiences. Our aim is to raise aspirations and self-esteem across the school community.

1.1 Policy aims and principles

- to treat all individuals with equal value
- to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- to advance equality of opportunity, remove or minimise disadvantages, meet needs, foster positive attitudes and good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (i.e. tackle prejudice and promote understanding)
- to provide a range of education and training programmes which encourage everyone to participate in learning
- to ensure that recruitment, retention and development of staff is done following equality principles
- to consider equality implications before and at the time that policies are developed as well as keeping them under review on a continual basis
- to assess whether policies and / or plans are having a negative or adverse, or positive impact on specific groups of individuals
- to ensure that all marketing activities and procurement processes meet equality and diversity best practice
- to respect the religious beliefs and practices of all individuals

In both its delivery of services and the employment of its staff, the academy will ensure that no person will be discriminated against due to any of the protected characteristics as detailed in the Act. This includes discrimination due to association or perception (where it is believed that an individual has a particular characteristic). The characteristics protected by the act are:

- age (as an employer)
- disability
- ethnicity
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- religion or belief
- gender
- sexual orientation
- carer responsibilities
- trade union membership.

1.2 Complaints

All complaints are dealt with under the SAET Complaints Policy.

Complaints should be made in writing and will follow the SAET complaint procedures and set timescales. The handling of complaints may be delegated to an appropriate person as per the SAET policy.

1.3 Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually or in the following circumstances:

- in line with changes to the equality objectives
- changes in legislation and / or government guidance
- as a result of any other significant change or event
- in the event that the policy is determined not to be effective

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 The SAET Board are responsible for:

- making sure its Academies follow all of its equality and diversity policies and codes, and meets its legal responsibilities with respect to equality

2.2 The Local Governing Bodies (LGB) will ensure that all academy policies promote the equality principles detailed in this policy. In addition to this, they will ensure that the academy:

- effectively communicates and adopts this policy throughout the academy correctly complies with all equality legislation
- sets equality objectives
- monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the equality policy on a regular basis, making any amendments to improve on the plan when and where necessary
- monitors educational outcomes, incidents of harassment and discrimination, and referrals by a range of criteria including disability
- observes the provisions in this policy in relation to recruitment, selection and promotion procedures ensures that resources are allocated to the promotion of equality of opportunity

2.3 The Academy Principals are responsible for:

- giving a consistent and high-profile lead on equality and diversity ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities
- advancing equality and diversity inside and outside the Academy
- working in partnership with the Local Governing Body to ensure policies and procedures are in place to comply with all equality legislation
- ensuring that the Academies implement its equality/diversity policies and codes of practice
- taking seriously all incidents of discrimination or victimisation and take appropriate action
- identifying and investigating any patterns with regard to exclusions and poor attendance in respect of particular groups
- ensuring that the performance of different groups of students is monitored and evaluated so that the particular needs of different students are met
- ensuring that additional grants and resources are appropriately targeted and monitored
- identifying a member of staff responsible for co-ordinating racial equality work and dealing with reported incidents of racism or racial harassment

2.4 Academy leaders (for example senior, subject and pastoral leaders) are responsible for:

- putting the Academy equality and diversity policies and codes into practice
- making sure that all staff know their responsibilities and receive the support and training necessary to carry them out
- following the relevant procedures and taking action in cases of unfair discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation

2.5 All staff (teaching and non-teaching) are responsible for:

- promoting equality and diversity through teaching and through relationships with students, staff, parents/carers and the wider community, and avoid unfair discrimination
- preparing students for life in a diverse society
- actively responding to any incidents of unfair discrimination, related to protected characteristics perpetrated by students, other staff or visitors
- keeping up-to-date with equality law and participating in equal opportunities and diversity training
- act as a good example to students
- promote a positive working environment
- ensuring that all students and staff are encouraged and able to achieve their full potential
- respecting and valuing differences between people
- preparing students for life in a diverse society
- acknowledging the existence of discrimination and take steps to prevent it
- monitor teaching and curriculum developments to ensure high expectations of all students and appropriate breadth of content in relation to the school and the wider community
- being aware that failure to comply with this policy will be grounds for disciplinary procedures to be followed

2.6 Visitors & Contractors will:

- be aware of and comply with the SAET's Equal Opportunities Policy.

2.7 Awareness

In order to implement this policy SAET and the individual Academies shall:

- communicate the policy as appropriate
- raise and discuss the issues covered in this policy on a periodic basis to ensure that all staff remain fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity
- endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that it will not consciously or unconsciously discriminate in the selection or recruitment of applicants
- ensure that all staff are trained to deal effectively with bullying, racist incidents, racial harassment and prejudice.

3. Disability

3.1 What do we understand by 'disability'?

'Disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities' (Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 Part 1 paragraph 1.1). This definition was amended and broadened in December 2005 under the 2005 Disability Amendment Act, which has now been repealed and replaced by the Equality Act 2010:

- People with cancer or surviving cancer are now included, as are people with HIV and Multiple Sclerosis from the point of diagnosis.
- For a mental impairment, the need for it to be clinically well recognised has been removed.

The Disability Equality in Education (DEE) 2005 recommends that all students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those with long term medical needs be treated as 'disabled' for the purposes of the Act and for equality. This is in addition to all students with long-term impairments, which have a significant impact on their day-to-day activities.

SAET uses a 'social model' of disability, as the basis for its work to improve equality for and tackle discrimination against disabled people. This model says that it is the world and society that creates barriers that limit or prevent disabled people from enjoying the same opportunities as people who are not disabled'.

SAET therefore uses the social model of disability throughout our work. We understand that the definition of 'disability' under the Act is different from the eligibility criteria for SEN provision; this means that disabled students may or may not have special educational needs. SAET recognises that social, educational and behavioural difficulties are part of this definition.

3.2 Disability Provision

The disability provisions in the Equality Act are different from those for the other protected characteristics in a number of ways. In particular, it works in only one direction; it protects disabled people but not people who are not disabled. SAET and its Academies may treat a disabled person more favourably than a person who is not disabled and therefore may have to make reasonable adjustments to practices to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that a disabled person can benefit to the same extent that a person without that disability can.

SAET and its Academies will consider and review its facilities and physical features to ensure that it is inclusive and accessible for all people as part of its general accessibility planning. The SAET Accessibility principles aims to:

- increase the extent to which disabled students can participate in the curriculum;
- improve the physical environment to enable disabled students, staff and visitors to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- improve the availability of accessible information to disabled people

4. Employment provisions

SAET is an equal opportunities employer and is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. We are determined to ensure that:

- everyone working in or coming into contact with SAET is treated fairly and not discriminated against on any of the above grounds
- our employment practices comply fully with current equalities legislation and associated codes of conduct
- our workforce, including volunteers, reflect the diverse society which we serve and provide a working environment free from any form of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying or victimisation

All recruitment will be carried out in accordance with SAET's Recruitment and Selection procedures, which is aimed at ensuring that the most suitable candidate is appointed fairly to the job.

Selection will be based on objective and job related criteria and the successful candidate will be chosen on his/her merits and abilities. Where a candidate is known personally to a member of the selection panel it will be declared. It may then be necessary to change the selection panel to ensure that there is no conflict of interest and that equal opportunities principles are adhered to.

Applicants will be asked to complete an equalities monitoring form as part of their application. This information will be separated from the application form and will be used for monitoring purposes only and will play no part in the selection process.

All employees will have access to development opportunities, promotion and training at SAET.

SAET will ensure that staff with disabilities have access to appropriate support in the form of aids, adaptations and other specialist services and will make reasonable adjustments to arrangements or practices to alleviate disadvantage.

SAET's recruitment and selection practices comply with all appropriate employment law legislation and will be amended to reflect any subsequent legislative changes.

More information about procedures relating to staff can be found in the appropriate related policies.

4.1 Enquiries about health and disability

SAET will not enquire about the health of an applicant for a job until a job offer has been made, unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work for the position that has been applied for.

In some instances, SAET may decide to ask necessary health questions after a job offer has been made to an individual. In such a situation, SAET will ensure that health-related questions are targeted, necessary and relevant to the job applied for.

4.2 Nationality and Immigration Act 2006

In order to comply with the provisions of this Act, we will take steps to ensure all staff are eligible to work in the United Kingdom. Successful candidates will be asked to produce original and specified documents(s) before a confirmed offer of employment is provided.

4.3 The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

In order to safeguard and protect the welfare of all the students in our care, we will ensure safe recruitment practices are followed. As such all employees, agency workers, contractors, volunteers, casual and supply staff will be required to provide relevant information for the Academy's safeguarding register to confirm their suitability to work with children.

4.4 HR Policies and Procedures

HR policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to improve, amend or adapt current practices to promote equality of opportunities at SAET.

Human Resources Policies will be applied consistently and fairly to all staff.

In addition, employees at SAET have access to range of policies, which are designed to support and encourage flexibility and diversity in the workplace.

5. Training

All staff will receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

SAET will ensure that no member of staff is denied access to any form of training because of an inaccessible venue or because the provision does not account for their disability. Staff with disabilities will be actively encouraged to attend course, which will support their career progression and personal development.

6. Staff discipline and suspension

SAET is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated fairly and consistently and this is held to account through our staff appraisal discipline, conduct, and grievance policies.

All employees are expected to co-operate fully with this policy and any member of staff found to have committed an act, or acts of discrimination or harassment will be dealt with under the SAET Staff Discipline & Grievance Policy. Proven discrimination or harassment will lead to summary dismissal.

7. Exemptions to the Equality Act 2010

7.1 Bullying

All forms of prejudice-motivated bullying are taken seriously and dealt with equally and firmly.

7.2 Curriculum

The content of the curriculum is explicitly excluded from the Act. SAET Academies will include a full range of issues, ideas and materials in the syllabus, in the aim to expose students to thoughts and ideas of all kinds, however challenging or controversial.

In particular, the academy will ensure that:

- the delivery of the curriculum does not subject individual students to discrimination
- teaching styles, methods, language, questioning and classroom management will be inclusive and engage all students
- suitable resources will be chosen which motivate and are sensitive to different groups, cultures and backgrounds
- teaching / assessment strategies are reviewed / relation to variations in learning and attainment
- each subject is reviewed to ensure that teaching and learning reflect the principles in this policy

All staff working in SAET and individual Academies will work with students (including a well-developed SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) curriculum and tutor sessions that promotes acceptance and inclusion) to:

- develop an ethos which respects and values all people
- actively advance equality of opportunity
- prepare students for life in a diverse society
- promote good relations amongst people within the Academies community and the wider communities within which we work
- eliminate all forms of unfair indirect and direct discrimination, bullying, harassment, victimisation or other oppressive behaviour

- make reasonable adjustments and do our utmost, within available resources, to remove barriers which limit or discourage access to Academy provision and activities
- take positive action to provide encouragement and support to individuals and groups whose progress has been limited by protected characteristics, stereotyping and cultural expectations

7.3 Religious observance

The Act allows SAET Academies to organise acts of worship, celebrate religious festivals or other forms of collective religious observance. SAET respects the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, students and parents, and will comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

Appendix 1

Types of Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 extends the scope of conduct prohibited in relation to the protected characteristics. The following provides an overview of what is included within the legislation.

Direct Discrimination

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

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when a condition, rule, policy or even a practice applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment

Harassment is 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'. Protection includes harassment because of perception and association.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. A person is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need to compare treatment of a complainant with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint under the Act.

Discrimination by Association

This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by Perception

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

Third Party harassment

The Equality Act makes an organisation potentially liable for harassment of their employees by people (third parties) who are not employees of the company, such as visitors or parents. The organisation will only be liable when harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions, and they are aware that it has taken place, and have not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again