

Forward Education Trust - Public Sector Equality Duty

Statement February 2025

The Equality Duty supports good education, care and welfare for children and positively enhances a wide range of pupil outcomes. It helps a Trust and its schools to identify priorities, by requiring the collating of evidence, examination of issues and consideration of how best to take action to improve the experience of different groups of pupils. It then helps it to focus on what can be done to tackle these issues and to improve outcomes by developing measurable equality objectives.

Forward Education Trust (“FET”) takes its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 very seriously. In the development of our equality objectives, the Trust Board had regard for the experience of all FET stakeholders, including but not limited to its employees, suppliers, children and their families and their communities.

The Public Sector Equality Duty and Supporting Specific Duties

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) made up of the general duty and supporting specific duties. The PSED applies to public bodies, including all schools and academies but not independent schools.

The general duty is contained in S149 of the Act and requires schools, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **advance equality of opportunity** between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- **foster good relations** across all characteristics.

Specific equality duties are detailed in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. In order to comply with their specific duties, Trusts and schools are required to:

- publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with their general duty. This should be done at least annually.
- prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives. This should be done at least once every four years.
- publish gender pay gap information annually if they employ 250 or more employees.

FET publishes this information on behalf of its schools.

How is the Forward Education Trust complying with our general duty?

1. **What we are doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by The Equality Act 2010.**

FET acknowledges that many individuals who share a protected characteristic experience discrimination in their early years, and potentially throughout their life. Harassment and violence are two of the most serious consequences of discrimination, damaging people emotionally and physically and limiting life choices and opportunities.

FET maintains a set of equality objectives which are reviewed on a regular basis. Our objectives are defined acknowledging the role that education and awareness plays in preventing future discrimination, harassment and victimisation. FET will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

As a Trust, we ensure that this is evident within all of our Trust staff and student policies and procedures, including our recruitment processes. Embedded systems are in place through our recording and analysing systems to ensure we use data and information to identify any concerns within each of our schools' concerning pupils with a protected characteristic. Discrimination, harassment and victimisation is addressed with students in school curriculums, and staff receive regular training on this dependent on role. Mandatory training for all staff takes place on an annual basis which supports strong safeguarding systems at school and Trust level to identify any bullying, discriminatory or prejudice behaviours and to allow us to put appropriate actions in place to address any issues.

2. What we are doing to advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

FET actively works to advance equality of opportunity through:

- Ensuring that we pay due regard to equality issues within all our key policies, planning, decision making processes and performance management; We review our policies on a regular basis and make policy and procedural amendments if we identify that there may be unintended disadvantage to any individual or groups of individuals based on their personal characteristics.
- Equalities information monitoring, including but not limited to the monitoring of complaints, attendance, suspensions and exclusions to identify any equalities issues, and engaging school and central team leaders to identify areas and strategies to respond to the changing diversity and needs of students, communities and colleagues.
- Promoting the active participation of minority communities in shaping the future of our schools at all levels, including paid staff, volunteer opportunities and community feedback opportunities.

- Consulting with vulnerable students, their families and staff on issues affecting them rather than with people acting on their behalf.
- Encouraging all students and their families to participate fully in all aspects of school life regardless of age, race, gender, disability, religion and sexual orientation.
- Removing barriers to accessibility, particularly in relation to education, employment and access to services, information and buildings.
- Adaption of curriculum for students with SEND in ways to allow children to make progress against their personal learning targets.
- Supporting students, staff and families according to their individual need.

3. What we are doing to foster good relations across all protected characteristics.

- Fostering understanding and respect for diversity through educating our students and their families both informally and within FET school curriculums.
- Countering myths and misinformation that may undermine good community relations.
- Ensuring the school staff, students and their families as well as the wider community fully understand the principles of equality, good relationships and good community relations, and facilitating experiences for them to apply what they have learnt within real life situations both inside and outside of school, e.g. visits to places of worship.
- Taking proactive steps to ensure that adults volunteering to work with FET are from diverse groups, across all levels including at the Trust Board in order to provide diverse and strong role models for all our students.

FET Equality Objectives to be published - February 2025

1. To ensure that staff and those responsible for governance are aware of current legislation surrounding equality and diversity and understand the Trust's responsibility;
2. To promote cultural understanding and awareness and tolerance of different religious beliefs between different ethnic groups within our school communities;
3. To promote mental health awareness and develop appropriate interventions where necessary;
4. To consider carefully, as we develop our curriculum and school improvement offers, across our cohorts of children with a range of special educational needs and disabilities, how to close gaps in attainment and achievement between students for all groups of students; especially students eligible for Pupil Premium, looked after children and students from minority ethnic groups;
5. To continuously review and revise curriculum so that it represents a diverse culture and society and encourages tolerance and respect.