

Equality Policy

AUTHOR:	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
DATE APPROVED:	27 January 2026
APPROVED BY:	Trust Board
NEXT REVIEW DATE:	January 2027

Contents

		Page No.
1	Vision and Aim	3
2	Legislation, Protected Characteristics and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)	3
3	Statutory Responsibility	3
4	Roles and Responsibilities	4
5	Consultation	5
6	Monitoring Arrangements	5
7	Links to other policies	6
8	Appendices: Appendix A – Equality plan and objectives template Appendix B – Equality & Diversity Charter	

1. Vision & Aims

Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST) are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all. BEST aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the Trust feel proud of their identity and are able to participate fully in education.

Vision

'To grow the best in everyone' regardless of age, disability, race, sex, gender assignment, maternity and pregnancy, marital/civil partnership status, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

2. Legislation, Protected Characteristics & Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

On 1st October 2010, the Equality Act 2010 replaced and consolidated all existing equality legislation.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful for a school/nursery to discriminate against a person by treating them less favourably because of their:

- Sex
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Age (for employees)
- Marriage and civil partnerships (for employees)

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty', that applies to public bodies including maintained schools and academies – this combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011. BEST and its entities aim to meet its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty by having due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

3. Statutory Responsibility

Schools, nurseries and other public sector organisations have two specific duties which they must achieve to demonstrate that they are meeting their duty, they must:

- Publish information which demonstrates their compliance with the duty to have due regard for the three aims of the general duty – this should be updated annually
- Prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives which they will pursue over the coming years to achieve the three aims – review and publish at least once every four years

Local Committees of the Board/Nursery Executive Board will work with the Principal/Nursery Manager to ensure that they:

- Evaluate how well the school/nursery is already achieving the three aims of the general duty across all of the protected characteristics

- Identify where there are gaps and prioritise these for action - identifying at least three measurable Equality Objectives to focus on over the next four years
- Ensure that the Equality Policy is implemented and monitored

All entities of BEST will:

- Publish equality information¹ (demonstrating compliance) – **updated annually**
- Publish equality objectives – **updated at least once every four years**
- Publish progress against / review of objectives - **annually**

Accessibility planning is a statutory duty. A plan has been produced by all settings within BEST, and published on their website.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Trust Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the main overarching Equality Policy • Delegate responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Equality Policy to the Local Committee of the Board/Nursery Executive Board and Principal/Nursery Manager • Ensure that the admission arrangements do not discriminate in any way • Ensure equal opportunities in the Trust’s staff recruitment and professional development programmes, and in membership of governing bodies • Receive an annual report from the Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Local Committee of the Board / Nursery Executive Board (some LCBs may choose to nominate a link governor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the setting complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations • Ensure that school/nursery policies do not discriminate in any way and promote equal opportunity • Ensure that the equality information and objectives as set out in this policy are published and communicated throughout the school/nursery, including to staff, pupils² and parents, and that they are reviewed and updated at least once every four years • Delegate responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives on a daily basis to the Principal/Nursery Manager • Receive updates on any issues from the Principal/Nursery Manager • Receive a report from Principal/Nursery Manager outlining progress against the objectives at least annually • Agree the equality plan and objectives at least once every four years • Promote community cohesion including good relations between pupils from different races, faiths/beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds
Principal/Nursery Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that this policy is adhered to within their school/nursery • Ensure that there are site specific procedures in place to review, monitor and promote equal opportunity – this may be documented in the form of site-specific guidance • Implement the school’s/nursery’s equality plan/actions • Promote knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives amongst staff and pupils

¹ The Equality Act 2010 states that schools must publish information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are affected by their policies and practices. However, data about employees will not need to be published where a public authority has fewer than 150 employees

² For the purposes of this policy, pupil refers to both ‘pupil’ and ‘student’

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor success in achieving the objectives and report back to the governors/board annually • Review and update, in conjunction with LCB/ Nursery Executive Board, the equality plan and objectives at least once every four years – objectives to be published • Publish information to demonstrate how the school/nursery is meeting the aims of the general public sector equality duty annually • Ensure all appointment panels have due regard to this plan so that no-one is discriminated against when it comes to employment or training opportunities • Promote equal opportunity when developing the curriculum • Ensure any appropriate training is implemented for staff • Ensure all incidents of unfair treatment and bullying or discrimination, including racist incidents, are addressed with due seriousness • Provide annual update to COO as per the quality assurance calendar
Designated member of staff for equality (in some School/nurseries this may be the Principal/Nursery Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Principal/Nursery Manager in promoting knowledge and understanding of equality practices and objectives amongst staff and pupils • Support the Principal/Nursery Manager in identifying any staff training needs, and deliver training as necessary
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected to have regard to this document and to work to achieve the school/nursery objectives • Ensure that all pupils are treated fairly, equally and with respect • Strive to provide material that gives positive images based on race, gender and disability, and challenges stereotypical images • Challenge any incidents of prejudice, racism or homophobia, and record any serious incidents and report as appropriate to the designated member of staff • Champion diversity and inclusion

5. Consultation

In the development of the plan and associated actions, settings are encouraged to consider a range of data. This may include attainment, recruitment, admissions, racist incidents, homophobic incidents, FSM eligibility, gender split, special educational needs and disabilities, children looked after, disadvantaged children, English as an additional language or young carers.

Settings are also encouraged to consult and engage with people affected by their actions. This may include parents/carers, pupils, staff, members of the local community and anyone who has special knowledge and can inform the setting's approach. This may be in the form of feedback from parents' evenings, parent forums, staff surveys, parent surveys, pupil council, EHCP review issues raised, feedback at governing body meetings etc.

6. Monitoring arrangements

Each BEST setting will set their own individual equality objectives/plan. These objectives will be agreed with the Local Committee of the Board/Nursery Executive Board.

In line with legislative requirements, progress against these objectives will be reviewed annually and published in a dedicated area of the setting's website. The entire plan will be reviewed on a four-year cycle.

The Equality Act 2010 and Schools departmental advice (May 2014) states that the regulations are not prescriptive and settings can decide how they publish the information, so long it is accessible to those members of the school community and the public who want to see it.

The Trust will complete a diversity report every four years and publish this on the BEST website. The Trust will also complete a gender pay gap report annually and publish a copy on the BEST website.

Each school/nursery will make regular assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to track pupil progress. As part of this process, each school/nursery will regularly monitor the achievement of all groups with protected characteristics to ensure that all pupils are making the best possible progress, and take appropriate action to address any gaps.

The Principal/Nursery Manager will report incidents and progress against objectives to the Local Committee of the Board/Nursery Executive Board. The Principal/Nursery Manager will provide the COO with an annual update. The COO will review and challenge the school/nursery objectives, plan and progress as appropriate and provide a summary report to the Board of Trustees.

7. Links to other policies

BEST aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for all people associated with the Trust and would refer staff, parents/carers and pupils to the following linked policies for policy/procedures relating to the specific areas listed.

- Complaints Policy (Trust and site specific)
- Admission Arrangements
- Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Wellbeing guidance and Charter
- Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting)
- Accessibility Plan (site specific)
- Anti-Bullying (site specific policy)
- Behaviour in Schools/Nursery (site specific policy)
- Equality Information & Objectives (site specific)
- SEND Policy (site specific)
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy (site specific)
- Religious Education & Collective Worship Policy (site specific)

Staff who feel that they are experiencing prejudice should refer to grievance policy, which includes information on harassment and bullying.

All BEST settings will publish a procedure for reporting incidents of prejudice, racism or homophobia, which is specific to their site.

8. Appendices:

- **Appendix A** – Equality plan and objectives template
- **Appendix B** – Equality & Diversity Charter

Appendix A – Equality Plan and Objectives

Insert
school logo

School/Nursery:	
Principal/Nursery Manager:	
Link Governor (if applicable):	
Date published:	
Review date:	

Objective 1: [state objective]

Key Action(s)	Lead	Target Date	Review / Outcome / End of cycle impact assessment
			<i>To be completed at annual review</i>

Objective 2: [state objective]

Action	Lead	Target Date	Review / Outcome / End of cycle impact assessment

Objective 3: [state objective]			
Action	Lead	Target Date	Review / Outcome / End of cycle impact assessment
Objective 4: [state objective]			
Action	Lead	Target Date	Review / Outcome / End of cycle impact assessment
Objective 5: [state objective]			
Action	Lead	Target Date	Review / Outcome / End of cycle impact assessment

Equality & Diversity Charter

At Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST) we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the Trust feel proud of their identity and are able to participate fully in school/nursery life.



BEST and its entities aim to meet its obligation under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) by having due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

LEADERSHIP	CULTURE	COMMUNICATION
<p>The Trust has a commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate how well the setting is achieving the three aims of the general duty across all of the protected characteristics • Identify where there are gaps and prioritise these for action – identifying at least three measurable objectives to focus on over 4 years • Ensure the Equality Policy is implemented and monitored • Observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development • Reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that exist • Ensure that equality is embedded within the curriculum 	<p>The Trust has a commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See all learners as of equal value • Recognise and respect differences • Foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belongings • Established Equality and Diversity working group • Mutual respect • Challenging incidents of prejudice including racism and homophobia 	<p>The Trust has a commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult and involve the BEST community • Promote equality and diversity education amongst the BEST community • Ensure awareness of policies through robust communication processes