Birchwood High School

your dreams, your future, our challenge

Equality Policy 2025

Committee	Full Trustee Board
SLT Link	Mr S Griffin
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Overview

At Birchwood High School, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all students, staff, parents and carers receiving services from our school, irrespective of race/ethnicity, sex, gender reassignment, disability, faith or religion/belief, socio-economic background or any other **protected** characteristic[1]. We aim to develop an inclusive culture that welcomes and appreciates diversity. We want all those connected to our school community to feel proud of their identity and to participate fully in school life.

We will ensure that equality strands are woven into the everyday working of our school, particularly in relation to formulating policy and practice around all aspects of the delivery of education and the employment of staff but also in relation to other functions such as setting budgets, making appointments, procurement and funding.
The progress of all our students will be monitored by race, sex and special educational needs and disability and we will use this data to support students, raise standards and ensure high quality inclusive teaching. We will tackle discrimination by the positive promotion of equality, challenging bullying and stereotypes and creating an environment in which we respect all and shape futures for all. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, work and visit here. This policy is fully reflected in our school's ethos and vision which seeks to promote progress for all and good relationships between everyone in the school community, building an atmosphere of safety, mutual trust and confidence – welcoming all, supporting all and celebrating all.

Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out how we integrate equality, diversity and inclusion into the school's core priorities and functions, which enables us to:

- Demonstrate how promoting equality and eliminating discrimination can help to raise standards
- Ensure that equality and diversity are part of the school's core business both as a provider of education and as an employer
- Promote community cohesion and good relations between students and staff of different backgrounds
- Ensure that the School is and is understood to be an environment that affords respect and fair treatment of all

Applicability of this Policy

This Equality Policy applies to all of the school's students, staff, Trustees, Members, parents/carers, visitors and community users.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The policy supports our responsibilities in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act"). This states that, in carrying out their functions, public bodies, including schools, are required to 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;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having "due regard" means that whenever we make decisions, take action or develop policy, we must assess whether there is an impact to any of the groups with protected characteristics, and that the equality duty must be integrated into school functions.

We also have duties under the Specific Duties Regulations to:

- Publish annually information quantitative and qualitative, showing compliance with the PSED set out in clause 149 of the Equality Act 2010
- At least every four years, set one or more specific measurable equality objectives that further the aims of the equality duty

The Equality Act 2010 sets out groups that are protected from discrimination to include nine protected characteristics. We all have one or more of the protected characteristics, so the Act protects everyone against unfair treatment. The protected characteristics are:

I. **Age:** where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).
II. **Disability:** a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
III. **Gender Reassignment:** the process of transitioning from one gender to another.
IV. **Marriage and Civil Partnership:**In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
V. **Pregnancy and Maternity:** Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination

is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

VI. **Race:** Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

VII. **Religion or Belief:** Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

VIII. **Sex:** A man or a woman.

IX. **Sexual Orientation:** Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes

This policy extends, however, to cover all aspects of vulnerability, in particular socio-economic background, Children Looked After, and those with Child Protection plans.

Equality Objectives

General Aims and Objectives

At Birchwood High School, we will ensure compliance with relevant legislation and that no one with a protected characteristic receives less favourable treatment. As set out in the DfE guidance on the Equality Act, the school aims to advance equality of opportunity by:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people that are connected to a particular characteristic they have (e.g. students with disabilities, or gay students who are being subjected to homophobic bullying)
- Taking steps to meet the particular needs of people who have a particular characteristic (e.g. enabling Muslim students to pray at prescribed times)
- Encouraging people who have a particular characteristic to participate fully in any activities (e.g. encouraging all students to be involved in the full range of school activities, including extra-curricular activities)

In fulfilling this aspect of the duty, the school will:

- Consider attainment, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, admissions, school movement, alternative provision, engagement and other relevant data each academic year with reference to students with different characteristics.
- Analyse the data referenced above to determine strengths and areas for improvement, implement actions in response and publish information about this work.
- Consider evidence available identifying improvements for specific groups (e.g. an increase in engagement with extra curricular activities by pupils with SEND.).
- Analyse further data about any issues associated with particular protected characteristics, identifying any issues which could affect our students or staff.

PSED Equality Objectives 2025/29

At least every four years we are required to set one or more specific measurable equality objectives. We have agreed single year objectives as follows:

1. To ensure our commitment to equality is evident in our strategic development planning, operations, promotion and self-review.

2. To identify and take action to close gaps in attendance and achievement for all groups of students: boys and girls, disadvantaged students, students with special educational needs and disabilities, looked after children and students from different heritage groups including white British boys.

3. To achieve inclusivity and cohesion between all students groups, through education, understanding and celebration of different cultures, religions, sexualities and ethnicities.

4. To ensure all students have equal access to the curriculum and co-curriculum, free from limitations, discrimination and barriers.

5. To establish a school culture where staff or students do not tolerate or ignores the use of homophobic, sexist and racist language and have the confidence and character to tackle it.

Fostering Good Relations

The school aims to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it by:

- Promoting tolerance, friendship and understanding of a range of religions and cultures through different aspects of our curriculum. This includes teaching in RS and personal, social, health and careers (PSHCE) education, but also activities in other curriculum areas. For example, as part of teaching and learning in English/reading, students will be introduced to literature from a range of cultures
- Holding assemblies dealing with relevant issues. Students will be encouraged to take a lead in such assemblies and we will also invite external speakers to contribute
- Engaging and working with our local community
- Encouraging and implementing initiatives to deal with any tensions between different groups of students within the school. For example, our school council has representatives from different year groups and is formed of students from a range of backgrounds. All students are encouraged to participate in the school's activities, such as sports clubs, and we will make all reasonable adjustments needed to facilitate participation.
- We have developed links with people and groups who have specialist knowledge about particular characteristics, which helps inform and develop our approach

Equality Considerations in Decision Making

The school ensures it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made.

The school always considers the impact of significant decisions on particular groups. For example, when a school trip or activity is being planned, the school considers whether the trip:

- Avoids any religious holidays

- Is accessible to students with disabilities
- Is of reasonable cost with evidence of best value for money
- Ensures financial support is available and clearly promoted to all families

The school will keep a written record (known as an Equality Impact Assessment) to show we have actively considered our equality duties and asked ourselves relevant questions. This is recorded at the same time as the risk assessment when planning school trips and activities. The record is completed by the member of staff organising the activity and is stored electronically with the completed risk assessment

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

- Use contextual data to improve the ways in which we provide support to individuals and groups of students.
- Monitor achievement data by race/ethnicity, sex/ and special educational needs and disability and action any gaps.
- Take account of the achievement of all students when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets. Ensure equality of access for all students and prepare them for life in a diverse society.
- Use materials that reflect the diversity of the school, population, and local community in terms of race/ethnicity, sex/ and special educational needs and disability, without stereotyping.
- Promote attitudes and values that will actively challenge racist and other discriminatory behaviour or prejudice.
- Provide opportunities for students to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures.
- Seek to involve all parents/carers in supporting their child's education.
- Encourage classroom and staffroom discussion of equality issues which reflect on social stereotypes, expectations, and the impact on learning.

Personal, social, physical, spiritual, moral and cultural development

Community cohesion: The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to the Education Act 2002, introducing a duty on the governing bodies of state schools to promote community cohesion. Community cohesion encompasses promoting good relations between students from different races, faiths / beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Cultural Capital: cultural capital is the accumulation of knowledge, skills, behaviours and experiences that a student can draw upon and which demonstrates their cultural awareness, knowledge and competence. Cultural capital is the essential knowledge that children need to be educated citizens.

At Birchwood High School, community cohesion and cultural capital are developed across the whole curriculum through personal, social, physical, spiritual, moral and cultural development. This is an

integral aspect of school life and as such it permeates through teaching and learning, the pastoral system, assemblies and relationships preparing our community for living and working in modern day Britain and adhering to British and our school's values.

We will contribute to all students' personal, social, physical, spiritual, moral and cultural development through:

Personal Development

- An ambitious, knowledge-based curriculum which is focused on helping students to remember things in the long term and gain a life long love of learning
- Careers Education Information and Guidance, including work experience and careers events.
- PSHCE provision
- The school's wider pastoral support framework including house assemblies, rewards and sanctions, attendance support and the school's behavioural expectations outlined in the Behaviour Policy
- Transition support as children move between years and beyond Y13
- Mental health and wellbeing provision through the pastoral team
- Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) through PSHCE
- Safeguarding procedures for all students in our care

Social Development

- The PSHCE curriculum
- The assembly programme linked to British and school values
- Charitable work and fundraising, through the House System
- Student Voice, developed through the School and Year Councils

Physical Development

- The PE curriculum
- Healthy eating through food technology and our school canteen
- Health Education through the PSHCE programme
- Extra-curricular activities including sport, Duke of Edinburgh, field trips and other provision
- Sports Day and the celebration of sporting participation and achievements through the house system
- The promotion of walking and cycling to school

Spiritual Development

- The RS curriculum
- The assembly programme
- Support for the expression of individual faiths
- The PSCHE programme

Moral Development

- The RS curriculum

- The school's behaviour system, including its intent, implementation and how behaviour is taught and managed in practice
- Contribution to local and national charitable projects
- Environmental and Sustainability projects – recycling, Eco Leaders
- The PSHCE and assembly programmes

Cultural Development

- The art curriculum, including visits to national galleries and local museums.
- The music curriculum including peripatetic teaching, and a range of music groups.
- Access to modern foreign languages, including trips abroad.
- The English curriculum and associated theatre visits to support learning.
- Author visits to work with groups of students.
- In addition to whole school provision and development of cultural capital, each curriculum area makes its own contribution to students' cultural capital development through delivery of a broad and considered curriculum.
- Curriculum Enrichment Week activities and opportunities broaden horizons

Reasonable Adjustments

At Birchwood High School, we are aware of our duty under the Equality Act 2010 to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled members of our school community. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on the student's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Schools may, and often must, treat disabled students more favourably than non-disabled students by making reasonable adjustments to ensure that a disabled student can benefit from what they offer to the same extent that a student without a disability can. The Equality Act 2010 extends the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled students.

At Birchwood High School we take positive steps to ensure that disabled students, staff, parents and visitors can fully participate in the education provided by the school and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that we provide for others.

We maintain an accessibility plan that will be resourced and implemented as appropriate. The plan is reviewed regularly and is available to view on the school website.

Staff, recruitment, professional development and training

Birchwood High School complies fully with legislation that protects all our employees from discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

With regard to disability, we make reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a disabled person being at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a person who is not disabled. This includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, transfers, dismissals, promotion, training and employment practices (e.g. dress codes) and disciplinary procedures.

We commit to the following;

- Taking proactive measures to ensure that the diversity of our workforce reflects that of our local community and wider society
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff and act on incidents of harassment and discrimination
- Provide regular training for staff to enable them to recognise and deal effectively with prejudice related incidents

Birchwood High School is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all and ensuring that all stages of recruitment and selection are fair. Recruitment and selection procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that applicants are not discriminated against on the grounds of protected characteristics. Birchwood High School acknowledges that unfair discrimination can arise on occasion and so will ensure that this equal opportunities policy is the foundation for all its activities.

Where a candidate is known personally to a member of the selection panel it will be declared before shortlisting takes place. 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.

Breaches of the Policy

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the Principal and governing body.

Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Governing Body:

- To adopt and monitor the Equality Policy and equality objectives.
- Ensure the school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that its employees do not carry out unlawful discriminatory actions or behaviour.
- Support and guide the school to have 'due regard' for equality in all its functions.
- Ensure the school complies with the two specific duties to publish equality information and objectives.
- To designate a named trustee with responsibility in this area to ensure that the school eliminates unlawful discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity.

The EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) link trustee ***will:***

- Meet with the designated member of staff for equality and other relevant staff members, to discuss any issues and how these are being addressed
- Ensure they're familiar with all relevant legislation and the contents of this document
- Attend appropriate equality and diversity training
- Report back to the full governing board regarding any issues

The Principal

The Principal is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination:

- Promote knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives among staff and students
- Monitor success in achieving the objectives and report back to governors
- Ensures that all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding the promotion and delivery of equality in school
- Reports to the governing body any issues or suggested amendments
- Challenge inappropriate language and behaviour, bias or stereotyping

The designated member of staff for EDI ***will:***

- Support the Principal in promoting knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives among staff and students
- Meet with the equality link trustee to raise and discuss any issues
- Support the Principal in identifying any staff training needs, and deliver training as necessary

All staff ***are expected to:***

- Have regard to this policy and to contribute to achieving the schools objectives through their professional practice
- Promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classrooms.
- Deal with, and report, all prejudice-related incidents that may occur.
- Support all students in their classes.
- Keep up to date with equalities legislation relevant to their work
- Have an inclusive and collaborative approach to their dealings with each other

Students **are expected to:**

- Treat each other with respect and courtesy
- Explore diversity with a healthy and positive approach
- Uphold the values of the school relating to equality, diversity and inclusion in their behaviour
- speak out if they witness or are subject to inappropriate language or behaviour or feel that they have been treated unfairly
- Set a good example regarding behaviour and social awareness to all

Parent/Carers **and visitors are expected to:**

- Support the school by promoting a positive attitude towards equality, diversity and inclusion at home

- attend any relevant meetings/awareness-raising sessions that they are invited to relating to the school's equality policy
- work with the school to resolve any incident relating to discrimination or victimisation that their child is involved in
- visitors are provided with safeguarding guidance with reference to expectations of the Equality Policy

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the governing body, unless there is specific reason for it to be reviewed earlier (for example an incident involving members of the school community or new legislation). Trustees will review how effective it is in tackling discrimination, promoting access and participation, equality and good relationships between different groups, and that it does not disadvantage particular sections of the community. Trustees will also review evidence that it is being put into practice in school by staff and students, and whether there is any need for extra training or development sessions across the whole school to ensure it is promoted and implemented as much as possible.

he senior leadership team will provide monitoring reports for review by the governing body. These will include:

- Progress against targets relating to equality and future plans
- School population
- Recruitment, progression and retention
- Key initiatives

This policy links to other policies and in general the principles of equality will apply to all other school policies.

Information

Information to support the monitoring of this policy may be gathered through:

- school census data and collection of appropriate equalities information
- student attainment and progress data relating to different groups
- students' views, actively sought and incorporated in a way that values their contribution
- information about how different groups access the whole curriculum and how they make choices between subject options
- sports and activities choices of all groups
- uptake of the extended school offer by group
- exclusions data analysed by group
- records of bullying and harassment on the grounds of any equality issue
- data on the recruitment, development, and retention of employees
- records of complaints, grievances and disciplinary procedures

- outcomes of actions taken to secure the involvement of parents and others who have been identified as difficult to engage

Due regard will be had for data protection regulations and the School's Data protection and related policies.

Information to be Published

The school will publish information on the school website, including.

- This policy
- The school's Equality Objectives
- An annual equalities report

The annual equalities report will provide information about our compliance with the PSED together with information relating to people within the school community who share relevant protected characteristics, including:

- The school's employees.
- People affected by the school's policies and procedures.

The school will not provide this information if:

- The employee is employed under contract personally to do work.
- The employer does not have this information, and it is not reasonably practicable for the employer to obtain the data.

Concerns and Complaints

The school aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.
The school will adhere to its Complaints Policy to ensure a straightforward, impartial, non-adversarial process, that allows a full and fair investigation, respects confidentiality, and delivers an effective response and appropriate redress. If a complaint has completed the school's process and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to appeal, as outlined in the Complaints Policy.
The school will work to develop good professional relationships between colleagues; however, the school understands that sometimes conflicts may arise. Through maintaining open communication, the school wants its employees to feel able to raise any grievances so that appropriate and effective solutions can be put in place. Grievances raised by staff members will be processed in accordance with the school's Grievance Policy.

Checklist for school staff and governors:

- The school collects information on race, disability and sex/ with regards to both students and staff, e.g., student achievement, attendance, exclusions and staff training
- The school analyses student achievement in terms of progress and standards for different groups and takes action when the trends or patterns indicate a need

- The school sets Equality Objectives to improve outcomes for vulnerable students and monitors progress on reaching these objectives
- The school ensures that all staff understand and implement the key requirements of the Equality Policy
- The curriculum includes opportunities for all students to understand and celebrate diversity and differences
- All groups of students are encouraged to participate in school life and make a positive contribution, e.g., through class assemblies and student voice
- The school monitors bullying and harassment of students in terms of difference and diversity (i.e., different groups) and takes action if there is a cause for concern
- Visual displays and multimedia resources reflect the diversity of the school community
- Role models from different ethnic groups, people with a disability, different types of stable committed relationships, all sexes/genders and members of vulnerable groups are promoted positively in lessons, displays, discussions and class assemblies
- The school environment is accessible to students, staff and visitors to the school and all reasonable adjustments are provided
- Open evenings and other events which parents, carers and the community attend are held in accessible parts of the school and issues such as language barriers are considered
- The accessibility needs of parents, students and staff are considered in the publishing and sending out of information