



L.E.A.D. Academy Trust

Lead • Empower • Achieve • Drive

# Equal Opportunities Policy

---

## **1. Equal Opportunities Policy**

The L.E.A.D. Multi Academy Trust (“the MAT”) is an equal opportunities employer. It is the MAT’s policy and practice to ensure that all individuals associated with our Schools are treated fairly regardless of their race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religious belief, age or disability.

The MAT is committed to operating equal opportunity principles is key in all of its dealings with employees, pupils, parent’s contractors and any other School associates. We believe there is an implicit business case to take action to remove all forms of discrimination. Discrimination is wasteful of talent and harmful to both individuals and the organisation. It has the effect of reducing employment prospects and preventing full consideration of abilities, potential and experience. The MAT believes that those organisations failing to tackle discrimination will be at a disadvantage in the recruitment and retention of talented employees.

The MAT have a recruitment policy, which sets out to ensure that we recruit the best person for the job and have a workforce, which reflects the diversity of the local community. The MAT also seeks to maximise the potential of all employees, as it makes good business sense. The MAT believe the effective and efficient use of people’s skills requires employment decisions to be based on competencies, qualifications, skills, potential and objective job related criteria, obtained by careful analysis of job requirements and job performance. The MAT intends to develop the talents of all our employees to be successful in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

As part of this overall equal opportunities policy the MAT are working hard also to encourage and develop other employment practices, which address all types of discrimination, based on adopting good practice principles in recruitment, selection for promotion, training and development, redundancy and retirement.

The MAT seeks to:

- provide services and employment within an environment free from discrimination.
- value diversity and will treat individuals with dignity and respect.
- opposed to all forms of unlawful discrimination of any kind as it recognises that discrimination and bullying adversely affects the working lives of individuals.

The Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Leadership team of each School are responsible for ensuring the success of this policy and all steps taken towards its achievement. The MAT will ensure it is implemented and monitored throughout the School’s operations. Failure to follow this policy could result in disciplinary action.

Everyone associated with the MAT has a responsibility to treat one another fairly and with respect and to actively participate in any measures required to ensure equality and non-discrimination. We will all be encouraged to take part in developing equality through the policies and practices in which we are involved. All managers have a particular responsibility for implementing equal opportunity policies and practices.

The MAT will continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and treat any breaches seriously.

This policy helps to protect the organisation against liability for the behaviour of individuals if they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent hostile conduct and also helps to ensure that the statutory responsibilities and obligations are met for equal opportunities under the Equality Act 2010.

## **The Equality Act 2010**

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are:-

- Age
- Disability
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation.

Under this act it is unlawful in a number of circumstances including employment and training to:

- Discriminate directly against anyone
- Discriminate indirectly against anyone
- Subject someone to harassment
- Victimise someone because they have made or intend to make a complaint or give evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination on grounds of age
- Instruct someone to discriminate on behalf of the School
- Discriminate against someone after the working relationship has ended.

It is also unlawful to discriminate against staff that work part time or are on fixed term contracts.

### **The MAT Policies and Procedures which Support this Policy**

Other MAT policies which support Equal Opportunities are:-

- Harassment Policy;
- Grievance Resolution Procedure;
- Whistle blowing Policy;
- Disciplinary Procedure;
- Safer Recruitment Policy.

All MAT activities will be linked back to this policy to ensure that our culture, policies and procedures endorse this policy.

### **Definitions**

#### *Harassment*

Harassment occurs if the purpose or effect is to create an intimidating, hostile, offensive or disturbing environment. Harassment includes any unwanted verbal or physical abuse and/or advances and/or behaviour, which an employee finds offensive and which causes them to feel threatened, humiliated, patronised, distressed or harassed. Such action may also be considered harassment if it impairs an individual's job performance, undermines their job security or creates a threatening or intimidating environment.

Harassment may be deliberate or unconscious, an isolated incident or repeated action. It will not necessarily be a defence that such incidents or action consist of words or behaviour, which might be claimed to be 'commonplace'.

### *Discrimination*

Discrimination, for the purposes of this policy, is where any employee is treated less favourably than any other employee on grounds of racial origin, gender, age, disability, marital status, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

### *Indirect Discrimination*

Indirect discrimination occurs where a provision, criterion or practice is such that it would be to the detriment of a considerably larger proportion of e.g. women than men or racial group etc.

- Which cannot be justified;
- Which is detrimental to that person(s), because they cannot comply.

### *Victimisation*

Victimisation, which is a further form of harassment, occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person, because they have referred to or have asserted their rights under the Equality Act 2010, or the Company's Equal Opportunities Policy. This would cover both those bringing cases under this legislation/policy or those witnesses in any investigation of a complaint.

### *A Racist Incident*

Any incident, which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

### *Bullying*

The Public Order Act identifies a range of activities (intentionally causing another individual to be harassed, alarmed or distressed by the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour), which can be regarded as criminal offences.

For the purposes of this procedure bullying is defined as the persistent and deliberate misuse of power or position to intimidate, humiliate or undermine.

Bullying can arise through intentional misuse of power or position to criticise unreasonably or unjustifiably and condemn; humiliating and undermining an individual's skills and ability such that they become fearful, losing confidence and belief in themselves.

Bullying can take many forms e.g.:

- Physical (at worst assault);
- Verbal (shouting, swearing, public reprimands, personal insults and name calling, spreading rumours, making threats, persistent criticism);
- Non-verbal (ostracising, setting impossible objectives, persistent intrusion, withholding information; unreasonable allocation of duties, removing responsibility, allocating menial tasks, constantly changing working guidelines or even inappropriate eye-contact).

A person who is subject to bullying may suffer from physical and/or emotional symptoms, e.g. disturbed sleep, feeling sick, sweating, shaking and/or loss of confidence, lack of motivation and depression. Additionally they may suffer in other ways, e.g. loss of training and development opportunities, missed promotion.

## **Queries**

If you have any queries or would like further discussion on any of the issues raised, please speak to the HR Department. This policy belongs to everyone associated with the MAT and therefore we welcome comments with regard to improvements to the policy or areas which you feel are currently missing or not working.

It is essential that everyone at our School/Academy works within the parameters of our Equal Opportunities policy. The information below is to make you aware of who is responsible for its implementation and what you should do if you have any concerns that members of staff are breaching the policy.

## **What to Do If You Feel Something Is Wrong**

If there is anything that happens within your work, which you are uncomfortable with or believe is discriminatory or unfair, in any way, please raise the issue immediately. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that there is equal opportunity in all our working practices and procedures.

Whilst the policy refers to specific aspects of equal opportunities, we will not tolerate any form of unfair treatment for our staff, pupils, parents and others including bullying or harassment.

The first person you should speak to should normally be your line manager. If the complaint is against your manager or they are not available, you should contact the HR Department.

If you feel that you require further independent help you may also call the Equality and Human Rights Commission Help line on 0845 604 6610.

## **Religious observance during working hours**

It is the MAT's policy to endeavour, on request, to alter an employee's working pattern so that breaks can be granted at times that coincide with his/her needs for religious observance.

Alternatively, the MAT will, where appropriate, endeavour to grant employees reasonable time off during working hours for religious observance insofar as this is possible and practicable, taking into account the needs of the academy and whether or not such arrangements might cause disturbance or disruption to other members of staff and/or their work or work patterns and/or pupils learning.

However, where an employee requests time off at a particularly busy time or at a time when the employee's absence would otherwise cause difficulties for the academy, or where the amount of time off requested is unreasonable or excessive (taking into account the needs of the academy), the MAT reserves the right to refuse to grant some or all of any of the time off requested.

All employees, whatever their religion or belief, will be treated equally in respect of requests for time off for religious observance or requests for alterations to their working patterns for religious reasons. All requests for time off should be made in line with academy procedures, including a written request from the employee detailing the time requested, the reasons for it and their consideration on the impact it may have on the academy.

In addition, it is the MAT's policy to ask all employees, on a voluntary basis, to disclose their religion or belief to it so that any religious needs can be assessed and fair consideration given to what facilities and arrangements it might reasonably provide for staff. While no employee is obliged to disclose his/her religion, belief or religious practices to the MAT, employees are encouraged to do so for this reason.

The academy provides a dedicated quiet room for the purpose of allowing employees to pray or undertake religious observance. This room is open to all employees, whatever their religion. Employees who do not adhere to any religion or belief may also use this room for the purpose of quiet contemplation or rest. Employees who choose to use the room provided for these purposes are requested to respect the rights of other individuals to observe their personal beliefs.

The MAT's catering facilities will provide, insofar as is possible and practicable, food options to suit employees of different religions. Employees who, for religious reasons, require specific types of food, or require food to be prepared in a particular way, should speak to their line manager to make their specific needs known. The line manager will then discuss the matter with the academy cook who will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the employee's needs. However, the MAT can not guarantee to provide food to suit all religious requirements at all times.

The MAT provides food storage and food heating facilities in staff rooms. These are available to all employees. Employees must ensure that all food placed in the fridges or on the shelves provided is stored in sealed containers at all times. This is for the benefit of all employees, some of whom may wish to ensure that their food does not come into contact with, for example, pork or other meat products.