Dersingham VA Primary and Nursery School

Staff Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Formally adopted by the Governing Board of	Dersingham VA Primary and Nursery School
On	February 2026
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Clive Brown
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Statement of intent

Dersingham Primary and Nursery School is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit. We are committed to supporting our staff and applicants to be their authentic selves in the workplace without judgement and ensuring that diverse communities are celebrated. We are creating a workplace culture in which diversity and inclusion is valued, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

As part of our zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, all staff and any job applicants will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation (the protected characteristics), as identified in the Equality Act 2010.

We are also mindful of intersecting identities within our school environment and will work with our communities to better understand the experience of multiple minority identities for individuals.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status. The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat pupils, parents, governors, third party organisations and former staff members.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including members of the SLT, teachers, TAs, learning mentors, support staff, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers and agency staff (collectively referred to as 'staff' in this policy).

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Flexible Working Policy
- Teacher Appraisal Policy
- Support Staff Performance Management Policy
- Staff Bullying and Harassment Policy

2. Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The PSED requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

3. Principles underlying this policy

In accordance with this policy and all related legislation and guidance, the school commits to:

- Creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

- Applying the principles of equity to all staff and all job applicants so that there is equality of opportunity. Our aim is that no individual is denied employment opportunities for reasons unrelated to ability.
- Establish programmes and processes that ensure a diversity of candidates at all career stages beginning with recruitment, including the development and promotion of talent through to the appointment of senior leadership.
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable employees with disabilities to function effectively and to their full potential.
- Implementing all internal policies and procedures on a fair and impartial basis.
- Promoting dignity and respect for all.
- Training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under this policy.
- Monitor how this policy is working in practice.

This policy applies to all aspects of the school's relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, flexible working and leave, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

Instances of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination will be dealt with as misconduct, in line with the school's Grievance Policy and/or Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. Harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective operation of this policy.
- Ensuring compliance with discrimination law.
- Monitoring the composition of the workforce regarding age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability.
- Monitoring how the composition of the workforce encourages equality, equity, diversity and inclusion, and meets the aims and commitments set out in this policy.
- Assessing how this policy, and any supporting action plans, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

The SLT will be responsible for:

- Setting an appropriate standard of behaviour and leading by example.
- Ensuring that those they manage adhere to this policy and promote the school's aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities.
- Taking appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities, in line with the school's Flexible Working Policy.
- Making opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff.
- Ensuring staff are helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Making staff progression decisions based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act 2010).
- Reviewing employment practices and procedures where necessary to ensure fairness.
- Updating employment practices and procedures, and this policy, to take account of changes in the law.

The head of HR will be responsible for:

- The day-to-day operational responsibility of this policy.
- Reviewing this policy regularly.
- Organising equal opportunities training, including for those involved in management and recruitment.
- Answering questions about the content or application of this policy.

Line managers will be responsible for:

- Participating in appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection good practice.

All staff will be responsible for:

- Conducting themselves to help the school provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.
- Understanding that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against their colleagues, customers, suppliers, visitors and the public.
- Taking seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by their colleagues, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the school's work activities.

5. Forms of discrimination

No person or body must unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people, including current and former staff members, job applicants, pupils, parents, contractors, volunteers and visitors. This applies within the school, outside of school and on school-related trips or events including social events.

The following forms of discrimination are unlawful and prohibited under this policy :

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics outlined in Appendix A. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination. Direct discrimination can include associative discrimination, where a person is treated less favourably because of their association with an individual with a protected characteristic, and perception discrimination, where a person is treated less favourably because of the mistaken belief that they possess a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by a provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will be discriminatory unless objectively justified.

Harassment related to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation is prohibited. Harassment including sexual harassment, is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is where someone suffers a detriment because they have done a "protected act" or it is believed they may do a protected act. A protected act is bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010, giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act 2010, doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Equality Act 2010 and/or alleging that the company or another person has contravened the Equality Act 2010.

Disability discrimination includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

6. Recruitment and selection

Recruitment, promotion, and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. When recruiting or promoting, we will aim to take steps to improve the diversity of our workforce and provide equality of opportunity.

The school will aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics. The school's recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it is relevant to the job and not disproportionate. The shortlisting of applicants will be done by more than one person wherever possible.

Job advertisements will avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. The school will take steps to ensure that vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market.

Job applicants will not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants will not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which will only be used with the head of HR's approval, such as:

- Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
- Positive action to recruit disabled persons.
- Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

The school is required by law to ensure that all staff are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, will be expected to produce original documents, e.g. a passport, before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Visas and Immigration.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, the school will monitor applicants' ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information will be voluntary and will not adversely affect an applicant's chances of recruitment, or any other decision related to their employment. The information will be removed from applications before the shortlisting process and will be kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy and in accordance with data protection legislation. Analysing this data helps the school take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

7. Staff training and promotion and conditions of service

Managers will be given appropriate training on recognising and avoiding discrimination, harassment, victimisation, unconscious bias and promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in the areas of recruitment, development and promotion.

The school will provide all staff with regular training to ensure that everyone is aware of and understands the contents of this policy and the Staff Bullying and Harassment Policy. Following the training, you will be required to confirm that you have read, understand and will comply with this policy and the Staff Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Staff training needs and associated development opportunities will be identified through regular staff appraisals, in line with the school's Teacher Appraisal Policy and Support Staff Performance Management Policy. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made based on merit. The school will adopt good practice in terms of data collection and use this data to monitor and measure the attraction, recruitment, retention and progression of staff.

Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

The school's conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they equal opportunities for all and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

8. Termination of employment

The school will ensure that all decisions regarding the termination of employment are undertaken in a fair and objective way and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory. In all cases the school will act in accordance with this policy and all related policies, examples being the school's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and the school's specific Capability Policies.

9. Disability discrimination

The school will encourage staff who are disabled or become disabled to inform the headteacher or their line manager about their condition so that the school can support them as appropriate.

Staff experiencing difficulties at work because of their disability (physical or otherwise) may wish to contact their line manager or the head of HR to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Their line manager or the head of HR may wish to consult with the staff member and a medical adviser about possible adjustments. We will considerer the matter carefully and try to accommodate the staff members needs within reason. If the school consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

The governing board will monitor the physical environment of the school premises to consider whether certain features place physically disabled staff, job applicants, service users, or other stakeholders at a substantial disadvantage compared to others. Where reasonable, the school will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

10. Part-time, zero hours, and fixed-term employees and agency workers

The school will monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. The school will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under the Flexible Working Policy.

The school will monitor its use of zero hours and fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities where appropriate. The school will, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

11. Breaches of this policy

The school takes a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination and victimisation may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

If a staff member believes they have suffered harassment, bullying or discrimination, or witnessed it happening to someone else in the workplace, please raise the matter with the appropriate senior employee or under the Grievance Procedure as appropriate.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. The school encourages the reporting of all types of potential discrimination, as this assists with ensuring that diversity, equity and inclusion principles are adhered to in the school. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The school takes a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

12. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed biannually by the headteacher in conjunction with the governing board. The next scheduled review for this policy is Feb 2028.

The school will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives and identify areas in which further resources or support are required to achieve equality of experience. As part of this process, the school will monitor the composition of job applicants and the benefits and career progression of staff. We will also monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation we receive to ensure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved, and workforce training is targeted where needed. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the head of HR.

Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics

The definitions used in this appendix are based on the Equality Act 2010, the full text of which is available here.

Age: The Act protects people of all ages; however, differential treatment because of age is not unlawful direct or indirect discrimination if it can be justified, i.e. if you can demonstrate that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Age is the only protected characteristic that allows employers to justify direct discrimination.

Disability: The Act protects people who are disabled; the Act defines this as someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender identity and/or reassignment: The Act protects people who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex.

Marriage and civil partnership: The Act protects people who are married or in a civil partnership against discrimination. Marriage covers any formal union which is legally recognised in the UK as a marriage. Therefore, marriage between a man and a woman and between a same-sex couple are covered. A civil partnership can be between same sex partners, opposite-sex partners.

Pregnancy and maternity: The Act protects people against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of their pregnancy and any maternity leave to which they are entitled either statutory or contractual.

Race: The Act protects people of all races; the Act's definition of race includes colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief: The Act protects people of any religion, including specific denominations or sects, as well as a lack of religion, i.e. employees or jobseekers who do not follow a certain religion or do not follow any religion are protected. The Act protects people of any belief; this is defined as any religious or philosophical belief, or a lack of such belief.

Sex: There is no definition of "sex" in the Equality Act; however, a reference to a person who has a protected characteristic is a reference to a man or to a woman.

Sexual orientation: The Act protects people's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex; persons of the opposite sex or persons of either sex.