



Including local arrangements for:

**MAIDEN ERLEGH SCHOOL IN READING**

<b>Initial approval:</b>	December 2021
<b>Review frequency:</b>	Every 4 years
<b>Date(s) reviewed:</b>	December 2021, December 2025

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## General Aims

Maiden Erlegh Trust is committed to ensuring that every pupil/student, member of staff, and community stakeholder is treated fairly, with dignity and respect. In all areas of our work, we will:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations across all groups, ensuring a shared sense of belonging.

We recognise that fairness does not always mean treating everyone identically. Where specific groups face barriers or disadvantage, the Trust will take reasonable and proportionate steps to remove or mitigate inequalities.

## Overarching Principles

The Trust and all its schools will operate in accordance with the public sector equality duty by adhering to the following principles:

- **Zero-tolerance of discrimination** and all other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- **Equality of value:** every member of our school communities is equally valued, and we will actively work to remove barriers for those with protected characteristics.
- **Representation and respect:** we will recognise, respect and reflect diversity across our curriculum, culture, employment practices and enrichment offer.
- **Belonging and inclusion:** we will promote positive relationships and a strong sense of cohesion within and across our school communities.
- **Participation:** we will encourage full participation from all groups, including in leadership, enrichment and decision-making.
- **Safe and respectful dialogue:** we will create a culture where pupils/students and staff can discuss, explore and celebrate different experiences and perspectives respectfully.
- **Equitable recruitment and development:** staffing processes will be fair, transparent and free from bias.
- **Commitment to professional development:** we will provide training and support to ensure staff understand and implement equality duties effectively.

## Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements of:

- **The Equality Act 2010**, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- **The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011**, requiring publication of equality information and objectives.
- **DfE guidance** on the Equality Act (2023).

- **Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) technical guidance** for schools.
- **Funding Agreements and Articles of Association.**

This policy should be read alongside:

- Admissions Policies
- SEND Information Reports
- Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies
- Staff Code of Conduct
- HR Policies
- Trust People Strategy

## Roles and Responsibilities

The Trust's approach to equality is structured to ensure clear accountability and robust monitoring.

### 4.1 Trust Board

The Trust Board will:

- Approve and review the Equality Information & Objectives every four years.
- Ensure the policy is communicated effectively across the Trust.
- Monitor, annually, the implementation and impact of equality work across the organisation through the Audit & Risk and Educational standards and culture committees

### 4.2 Audit & Risk Committee

The Committee will monitor equality impacts relating to:

- People policies and processes
- Health and safety
- Communications and accessibility
- Operational compliance

### 4.3 Educational Standards and Culture Committee

The Committee will oversee:

- Curriculum accessibility, including for pupils/students with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.
- Progress towards closing gaps in attainment and experience.
- School-level data and reports that provide a cumulative view of pupil/student experience.

### 4.4 Executive Team

The Executive Team is responsible for:

- Ensuring Trust-wide compliance with equalities legislation.
- Ensuring significant decisions consider equality duties and that Equalities Impact Assessments are completed where required.
- Supporting Headteachers to implement this policy effectively.
- Reviewing Trust-level Equality Objectives every four years.

## **4.5 Headteachers**

Headteachers will:

- Maintain and publish an up-to-date Accessibility Plan, reviewed every two years
- Promote staff understanding of the equality objectives.
- Ensure appropriate CPD and guidance is available.
- Monitor and report school progress against equality objectives through data reviews and governance processes.

## **4.6 All Staff**

All staff must:

- Understand and adhere to the Trust's equality objectives.
- Undertake equality training at induction and at least every two years.
- Model respectful, unbiased behaviour.
- Challenge and report discriminatory and inappropriate behaviour.

## **Eliminating Discrimination**

To meet our legal obligations, the Trust will:

- Ensure all policies reference the requirement to avoid discrimination and prohibited conduct.
- Provide regular reminders of equality responsibilities through meetings, handbooks and the IntraMet.
- Provide induction and refresher training for all staff.
- Require Headteachers to monitor equality issues and report them through established governance structures.

## **Advancing Equality of Opportunity**

We will advance equality of opportunity by:

- Removing or reducing disadvantages experienced by those with protected characteristics.
- Meeting the specific needs of individuals through reasonable adjustments.
- Encouraging participation in all areas of school life.

## **6.1 Publishing Pupil/Student Information**

The Trust will:

- Produce and analyse attainment and experience data across groups.  
Use this analysis to inform Strategic and School Improvement Plans.  
Publish appropriate summary information on school websites.

## **6.2 Publishing Staff Information**

As an employer, the Trust will publish data (quantitative and qualitative) showing how staff with protected characteristics are represented and supported, including:

- Workforce composition
- Gender pay gap information
- Recruitment and retention patterns

- Flexible working applications and outcomes

### **6.3 Information Gathering and Data Protection**

- The Trust will gather only the information necessary to demonstrate compliance with equality duties.
- Sensitive data will only be collected with explicit consent.
- All published data will be anonymised; small cohorts will be suppressed.

## **Fostering Good Relations**

The Schools in the Trust will foster good relations by:

- Promoting respect, kindness and understanding through curriculum and enrichment.
- Delivering assemblies, workshops, and community engagement that reflect a range of cultures and identities.
- Encouraging diverse representation in leadership, pupil/student groups and promotional materials.
- Providing safe opportunities for respectful discussion and exploration of difference.
- Building relationships with parent communities and local organisations.
- Addressing tensions between groups swiftly and effectively.

## **Equality Considerations in Decision-Making**

Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) will be completed for all significant Trust or school decisions. Records will demonstrate how:

- Potential impacts were considered
- Protected groups were taken into account
- Reasonable adjustments were identified
- Mitigating actions were agreed

## **Maiden Erlegh Trust Equality Objectives**

The Trust sets the following measurable objectives for the 2026–2029 cycle.

### **Objective 1: A High-Quality, Inclusive and Diverse Curriculum**

**We will:**

- Ensure all pupils/students have access to the most ambitious and appropriate curriculum for them, regardless of protected characteristic, SEND or disadvantage.
- Make teaching choices and employ pedagogical approaches based on inclusion, support and challenge for all pupils/students.
- Use examples, case-studies, texts, and other resources include positive representation from a diverse range of groups, especially with those protected characteristics.
- Provide a range of enrichment experiences and opportunities aimed at reducing cultural capital differences between groups of pupils/students.

**As a result, we will**

- Reduce, and where possible eliminate, any differences in achievement between groups.
- Increase the numbers of Disadvantaged (including Pupil premium, SEND) going onto appropriate destinations

**Objective 2: Respectful, Kind and Inclusive School Cultures****We will:**

- Promote empathy for, and understanding of, the experience and needs of those with protected characteristics and the most disadvantaged.
- Celebrate differences and the experience, language, and culture of others – ensuring they are seen as enriching for the individual and the community.
- Work with pupils/students to ensure their experience of school is one of safety, confidence, and optimism.
- Listen to pupils/students from different groups.
- Ensure parents and carers feel welcome and are aided as far as possible to support their child's education, whatever their background.

**As a result, we will:**

- Ensure pupils/students feel safe, included and that their voice is heard in our schools.
- Ensure that pupils/students with protected characteristics and the most disadvantaged are not disproportionately represented in exclusion and absence data (or that adverse gaps are reducing rapidly).

**Objective 3: A Safe, Open and Equitable Working Environment for our Staff****We will:**

- Implement the Trust wide people strategy, which includes a focus on building a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture. Relevant commitment strands in the strategy include:
  - Developing inspirational, inclusive leaders who drive exemplary outcomes
  - Building a collaborative, One Trust culture, where everyone has a voice.
  - Upskilling Line Managers to provide a fair and supportive environment for their team
  - Creating robust workforce plans with a focus on developing diverse talent.
  - Widening our talent pool and entry routes and improve the induction experience
- We will upskill our line managers enabling them to support our organizational equalities objectives.
- Where possible, implement blind shortlisting across Trust recruitment processes.
- Meet our Disability Confident commitments within our people processes

- Increase opportunity for staff voice, including those with protected characteristics, starting with our Staff Representative Board.
- Ensure all staff complete equality refresher training at least every two years.

**As a result, we will:**

- Improve the diversity of our workforce, including those with protected characteristics.
- Ensure staff feel safe and supported and work in an inclusive working culture.

## **ANNEX 1: MER EQUALITY OBJECTIVES**

- To support a school environment and culture that welcomes, protects, respects and celebrates diversity.
- To continue working to close gaps in attainment and achievement among all student groups, including (but not limited to) gender, disadvantaged students, those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Looked After Children, and students from diverse cultural and heritage backgrounds.
- To continue our work with staff and students to ensure that discrimination, harassment, and prejudice are not tolerated, and action is effective to prevent and deal with them and in doing so, educating students about protected groups.
- Monitor and take action on any use of discriminatory language by students, including (but not limited to) racist, homophobic, transphobic, biphobic, sexist, ableist, or religion-based remarks.
- To ensure that all students are given the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the life of the school, particularly focusing on developing leadership opportunities for all students.
- To ensure that all students have access to strong support in making choices for education and training post 16.
- Identify opportunities to raise the visibility of role models representing people from protected groups.

## **ANNEX 2: DEFINITIONS**

### **Bullying**

There is no legal definition of bullying, but it is usually defined as behaviour that is:

- Repeated.
- Intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally.
- Often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Sometimes bullying is classed as harassment, which is against the law.

### **Harassment**

Harassment is when bullying or unwanted behaviour is related to any of the following (known as 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010).

For it to count as harassment, the unwanted behaviour must have either:

- Violated the person's dignity, whether it was intended or not.
- Created a hostile environment for the person, whether it was intended or not.

### **Victimisation**

Victimisation is when someone is treated unfairly because they made or supported a complaint to do with a 'protected characteristic', or someone thinks they did or might do.

### **Discrimination**

#### **Direct discrimination**

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than you treat (or would treat) another person because of a protected characteristic.

In order for someone to show that they have been directly discriminated against, they must compare what has happened to them to the treatment a person without their protected characteristic is receiving or would receive. A person does not need to find an actual person to compare their treatment with but can rely on a hypothetical person if they can show there is evidence that such a person would be treated differently.

#### **Discrimination based on association**

Direct discrimination also occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic (other than pregnancy and maternity). This might occur when a person is treated less favourably because their sibling, parent, carer, or friend has a protected characteristic.

## **Discrimination based on perception**

Direct discrimination also occurs when a person is treated less favourably because someone mistakenly think that they have a protected characteristic.

## **Discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity**

It is discrimination to treat a woman (including a female student of any age) less favourably because she is or has been pregnant. It is direct sex discrimination to treat a woman (including a female student of any age) less favourably because she is breastfeeding.

## **Indirect discrimination**

Indirect discrimination occurs when you apply a provision, criterion, or practice in the same way for all persons or a particular group, but this has the effect of putting persons sharing a protected characteristic within the general group at a particular disadvantage. It does not matter that you did not intend to disadvantage the person/s with a particular protected characteristic in this way.

‘Disadvantage’ is not defined in the Act, but a rule of thumb is that a reasonable person would consider that disadvantage has occurred. It can take many different forms, such as denial of an opportunity or choice, deterrence, rejection, or exclusion.

You cannot show that the provision, criteria of practice is justified as a ‘proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim’. To be legitimate the aim of the provision, criterion or practice must be legal and non-discriminatory and represent a real objective consideration. In the context of education, examples of legitimate aims might include:

- Maintaining academic and other standards.
- Ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of students.

Even if the aim is legitimate the means of achieving it must be proportionate. Proportionate means ‘appropriate and necessary’, but ‘necessary’ does not mean that the provision, criterion, or practice is the only possible way of achieving the legitimate aim.

The more serious the disadvantage caused by the discriminatory provision, criterion, or practice, the more convincing the justification must be. In a case involving disability, failure to comply with the duty to make relevant reasonable adjustments, will make it difficult to show that the treatment was proportionate.

## **Reasonable adjustments**

The Trust has a duty to reasonably adjust, first introduced under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The reasonable adjustments duty under the Equality Act operates slightly differently. The object of the duty is the same: to avoid as far as

possible by reasonable means, the disadvantage which a disabled person experiences because of their disability.

The Trust/schools are required to take reasonable steps to avoid substantial disadvantage where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled students at a substantial disadvantage.

This duty is owed to existing students, applicants and, in limited circumstances, to disabled former students in relation to the following areas:

## **ANNEX 3: EXAMINATION TEAM PROCEDURES**

### **A Training invigilators**

Each invigilators will be made aware of the Equality Act 2010, and a copy of this policy provided as part of their training.

As part of the training process all invigilators will be made aware of procedures relating to emergency evacuation and medication, especially where they relate disabilities.

All invigilators are aware of alternative means of communication, especially in the examination room when conveying information to disabled candidates.

### **B Information for candidates**

Information supplied to candidates with a disability, such as JCQ Information for candidates, are suitably sized and adapted.

### **C Seating arrangements**

There is provision available outside the examination rooms to enable those with a disability or those candidates who experience extreme stress or anxiety, to sit and rest before they enter the examination.

There is sufficient space between desks and chairs to enable a candidate (or an invigilator) who uses a wheelchair to enter and leave the room without difficulty.

Where a candidate may become unwell during the examination due to the nature of their disability, they will be seated close to the exits to make them feel more comfortable and to limit any disruption to others within the examination room.

Seating is provided which is both appropriate and comfortable for those who may have a disability which affects sitting and posture.

### **D Candidates requiring access arrangements**

Where a candidate has been granted the use of an Oral Language Modifier, a reader or a scribe, those individuals who will be acting as an Oral Language Modifier, a reader or a scribe will be introduced to the candidate prior to the examination(s) taking place. Where a candidate has been granted the use of a prompter, the person appointed to act as a prompter is aware of disability etiquette, particularly when touching the candidate's desk as a means of a prompt or tapping the candidate's arm or shoulder. Where on-screen tests are used, hardware and software will be adapted for those candidates with a sensory or multi-sensory impairment.

### **E Emergency evacuation procedures**

Invigilators and all other centre staff involved in conducting examinations will be made aware of the emergency evacuation procedures in place for those candidates with a disability who may need assistance in leaving the building. When evacuation and emergency procedures are being explained to candidates, attention will be given to those candidates with a disability, for whom such procedures may be different