



Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy

Policy Number	116
Version Number	V.01
Date Reviewed	September 2025
Next Review Date	September 2026
Department Responsible	HR
Executive Lead	CEO
Approving Body	Board of Trustees
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1.Introduction

Promoting and delivering equity, diversity, and inclusion involves all employees cultivating a work environment and culture where every person can feel safe, experience a sense of belonging, and is empowered to achieve their full potential. The unique talents, life experience, knowledge and self-expression that comprise the investment our employees make and reflect in their work significantly contribute to the culture, reputation, and success of our schools and Trust.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that our EDI approach reflects who we are and aligns with our objectives. We also acknowledge that our behaviours must reflect a deep respect for diverse cultures, adhering to the standards expected by our stakeholders and communities. This commitment from all employees strengthens our internal and external relationships and reinforces integrity across all working environments.

Equity, diversity and inclusion are core values, and we believe that a diverse and inclusive workforce is fundamental to creating a vibrant, innovative, and successful culture. We embrace and encourage our colleagues' differences and seek to ensure that every individual feels valued.

Our policies and recruitment practices will cultivate and support a work environment that is truly representative of all sections of society and together we will actively challenge discrimination, should it ever arise, and remove barriers in our recruitment practices and for colleagues seeking opportunities through training and development, career pathing, and promotion.

Together we will work hard to ensure a working environment that values difference and is free from discrimination, victimisation, and harassment, and should it occur, will take swift action through clear channels such as our Bullying & Harassment and Disciplinary policies.

2.Purpose & Scope

This policy applies to all Rayleigh Schools Trust employees and is designed to:

- Ensure that our commitment to equity and diversity is reflected in all our processes.
- Enable us to manage unfair and unlawful discrimination issues effectively.
- Support our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate bullying, discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and support good relations.
- Support professional behaviours and practices that ensure equity, fairness, and respect for all employees.
- Not unlawfully discriminate because of any of the characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010:

Age

Disability

Gender reassignment

Marriage and civil partnership

Pregnancy and maternity

Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)

Religion or belief



Sex
Sexual orientation

- Not unfairly discriminate because of non-protected characteristics such as:

Menopause and perimenopause
Socioeconomic status
Physical appearance
Political belief
Trade union membership
Educational and employment background
Parental and caregiver status

- Oppose and avoid all forms of discrimination. This includes in:

Pay and benefits
Terms and conditions of employment
Dealing with Grievances and Disciplinarys
Dismissal
Redundancy
Requests for flexible working
Selection for employment, promotion, training, or other developmental opportunities

All employees have responsibility for ensuring that this policy is put into practice alongside a personal commitment from all in making it effective, and in setting an exemplary standard for others to follow. Additional and specific responsibilities apply to those who manage others, and to those who participate in recruitment, training and development.

3.Principles

- We will comply with and, where appropriate, exceed statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- We are an equal opportunities employer committed to providing effective support so that everyone can perform to the best of their abilities.
- We will actively prevent discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and promote equality of opportunity.
- We are responsible for challenging, reporting and/or directly dealing with discriminatory behaviour, unfair treatment, harassment, and victimisation.
- We are responsible for ensuring that any decisions made at work are made without bias or prejudice.
- In all roles, employees understand and respond effectively to the diverse needs of our workforce, providing equal access to training and development, career pathing, and promotion.
- Discrimination, bullying, harassment, and victimisation are disciplinary offences which will be pro-actively managed under the Disciplinary Policy

4.Outcomes

- Our workforce will reflect all sections of society, and employees are empowered to report instances of discrimination, harassment, and unfair treatment without fear of victimisation.
- Employees are engaged and feel that they belong to our schools, knowing they are treated fairly and without bias or discrimination in their working lives.
- Employees feel safe and empowered to report instances of discrimination, bullying, harassment, and victimisation

5.Monitoring & Review

- HR alongside the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees will monitor the effectiveness of this policy.
- HR will regularly analyse our people data to identify and address any barriers or disparities among employee groups.
- A formal review of this policy will take place once a year unless there is a significant change in relevant legislation or business needs which triggers a review before then.

6.Definitions provided in the Equality Act (2010)

Our combined commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is guided by the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and summarised as:

Age

Age discrimination is when a person is treated differently because of their age in one of the situations that are covered by the Equality Act. The Act states that a person must not be discriminated against because:

- They are (or are not) a certain age or in a certain age group.
- Someone thinks they are (or are not) a specific age or age group, this is known as discrimination by perception.
- They are connected to someone of a specific age or age group, this is known as discrimination by association.

Disability

The Equality Act definition of disability states '*a physical or a mental condition which has a substantial and long-term impact on someone's ability to do normal day to day activities.*' The Act states that a person must not be discriminated against because:

- They have a disability
- Someone thinks they have a disability (this is known as discrimination by perception)
- They are connected to someone with a disability (this is known as discrimination by association)

Gender reassignment

The Equality Act states that a person must not be discriminated against because of gender reassignment. In the Equality Act, gender reassignment means proposing to undergo, undergoing or having undergone a process to reassign one's sex.

Marriage and civil partnership

The Equality Act states that you must not discriminate against a person because they are married or in a civil partnership. In the Equality Act, marriage and civil partnership means someone who is legally married or in a civil partnership.

Although a person who does not fall under these protected characteristics are not protected under the Act, we additionally ensure a person is not unfairly discriminated against due to their individual, personal living arrangements.

Pregnancy and maternity

The Equality Act states that pregnancy and maternity discrimination is when a person is treated unfavourably (differently) because they are pregnant, breastfeeding or have given birth. The Act states that a person must not be discriminated against because:

- Of their pregnancy
- They have given birth in the previous 26 weeks
- They have given birth, including being treated unfavourably because they are breastfeeding
- They have a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, and they are protected from discrimination for 26 weeks after the stillbirth

Race

The Equality Act states a person must not be discriminated against because of their race. In the Act, race can mean a person's colour or nationality (including citizenship). It can also mean ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as their current nationality. Race also covers ethnic and racial groups. This means a group of people who all share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity or race.

Religion or belief

Religion or belief discrimination is when a person is treated differently or unfavourably because of their religion or belief, or lack of religion or belief, in one of the situations covered by the Equality Act.

The Act states that a person must not be discriminated against because:

- They are (or are not) of a particular religion
- They hold (or do not hold) a particular philosophical belief
- Someone thinks they are of a particular religion or hold a particular belief (this is known as discrimination by perception)
- They are connected to someone who has a religion or belief (this is known as discrimination by association)

Sex

Sex discrimination is when a person is treated differently because of their sex, in certain situations covered by the Equality Act 2010. The Act states that a person must not be discriminated against because:

- They are (or are not) a particular sex
- Someone thinks they are the opposite sex (this is known as discrimination by perception)
- They are connected to someone of a particular sex (this is known as discrimination by association)

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation discrimination is when a person is treated differently because of their sexual orientation in one of the situations that are covered by the Equality Act. The Act states that a person must not be discriminated against because:

- They are heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual
- Someone thinks they have a particular sexual orientation (this is known as discrimination by perception)
- They are connected to someone who has a particular sexual orientation (this is known as discrimination by association)

In the Equality Act, sexual orientation includes how a person chooses to express their sexual orientation, such as through appearance or the places they visit.

7.Discrimination

We have a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination can come in one of the following summarised forms:

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have. For example:

- During an interview, a job applicant shares that they have multiple sclerosis. It is decided not to appoint them even though they are the best candidate interviewed, because it is assumed the candidate will need a lot of time off sick.

Discrimination by association

This is discrimination against a person because they associate with another who possesses a protected characteristic. For example:

- A person with parental responsibilities is offered a promotion at work. After this, they mention during a casual conversation that their daughter has a disability. Based on this, a decision is made to withdraw the offer because the parent could not focus entirely on the new role because of perceived caring responsibilities for their daughter.

Perception discrimination

This is discrimination against a person because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic but are perceived as doing so. For example:

- A person incorrectly perceives another to have a disability, and therefore does not

consider them for particular opportunities, work projects, promotion etc.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when there is a condition, rule, policy or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages employees who share a protected characteristic. For example:

- A person who is 21 years old is not eligible to be promoted because of a condition that only people with a post graduate qualification (such as a Masters) can be promoted. Although this applies to everyone it disadvantages people of their age because they are less likely to have that qualification.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

Third party harassment

The Equality Act makes employers potentially liable for harassment of their employees by people (third parties) who are not employees of their Company, such as volunteers or contractors. The employer will only be liable when harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions, and that they are aware that it has taken place, and have not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening

Discrimination arising from a disability

The Equality Act states that treatment of a disabled person amounts to discrimination where:

- An employer treats the disabled employee unfavourably;
 - this treatment is because of something arising in consequence of the disabled employees' disability; and
 - the employer cannot show that this treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, unless the employer does not know, and could not reasonably be expected to know, that the person has the disability.
- Discrimination through failure to provide reasonable adjustments. Discrimination against a disabled employee occurs where an employer fails to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments imposed on them in relation to that disabled employee, the employer must;
 - avoid the substantial disadvantage where a practice applied by or on behalf of the employer puts a disabled colleague at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled.
 - remove or alter a physical feature or provide a reasonable means of avoiding such a feature where it puts a disabled colleague at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated badly, or less favourably because they have made or supported a discrimination or harassment complaint, or because they are suspected of doing so. Victimisation is a specific type of discrimination under The Equality Act and is different to bullying.

The Act states victimisation as *'suffering a detriment' because an employee has done or intends to do a 'protected act'*. A 'protected act' means taking action related to discrimination law and includes:

- Making a complaint of discrimination or harassment
- Supporting another colleague complaint
- Gathering information that may lead to a complaint
- Saying something or providing evidence that does not support another colleague's complaint

The above protects all from victimisation if they have done something in 'good faith'. However, someone is not protected if they:

- Deliberately provide false evidence
- Deliberately makes a false allegation of discrimination or harassment

8. Recruitment & Employment

We continuously seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all current and potential employees. We will conduct and monitor our recruitment in an open and accountable way and according to equal opportunities practices, regularly reviewing the results of monitoring exercises to ensure fairness is evident at all stages.

We ensure that selection for employment and career development opportunities are fair and equitable. Where reasonable, we will make tailored adjustments to accommodate the needs of our candidates and current colleagues and will seek to deal with any under representation of particular groups and make full use of positive action provisions permissible within legislation.

9. Equal Opportunities Monitoring

We aim to remove discrimination wherever we encounter it in our work and to promote equity in all we do. This means being fair to everyone and ensuring no job applicant or colleague receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, trade union activities, pregnancy or maternity, civil partnership or marriage, religious or other beliefs, or gender re-assignment.

As part of our commitment to equity and diversity, we undertake a monitoring process to ensure that the above aim is fulfilled. Monitoring helps us to evaluate the effectiveness of our Equity, Diversity & inclusion policy.

Information on the protected characteristics is collected at the point of recruitment. The

monitoring information is entered in the employee's personal record on the HR database. Based on this information, HR undertakes regular monitoring exercises and provides reports to the Board of Trustees. These reports monitor ethnic origin, sex, disability, age, religious belief, and sexual orientation. Where appropriate, the reports also include monitoring information on part-time/full-time employees and pay banding.

All the above information is reported appropriately anonymised, and no individual colleague is identifiable in the reports. All equal opportunities monitoring information is kept secure, confidential and in compliance with Data Protection Act (1998) guidelines.

10. Employee Assistance Programme

If any employee feels that these matters are affecting their health or wellbeing, we encourage them to speak to their line manager, a trusted colleague, or HR, who can provide support. In addition, our commitment to employee welfare includes access to our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

The EAP provides a confidential support network available 24/7, offering expert advice and compassionate guidance on a wide range of personal and work-related issues. The service offers not only reactive support when needed, but also proactive and preventative support to deliver the best possible outcomes.

All colleagues can access the service by calling **08000 856 148**.

More information can also be found in the **People Hub**.