

Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy applies across all partner schools in the Stephen Sutton Multi-Academy Trust (SSMAT). It is available on the SSMAT website and is accessible from our schools' websites.

POLICY APPROVAL and REVIEW

Review date: ***Sep. '20***

Approval needed by: ***Trust Board***

Adopted: ***Oct. '19***

Next review date: ***Sep. '21***

1. Introduction / Overview

- 1.1 The Stephen Sutton Multi-Academy Trust (SSMAT) promotes equal opportunities for the benefit of all. This policy addresses the expectations and entitlements covered by the Equality Act (2010) and the Human Rights Act 1998. It is a Trust-wide policy that applies to employees, students and governors/directors. All partner schools have their own equality objectives and accessibility plans, created at a local level and having due regard to this policy and Trust-wide equality and accessibility objectives.
- 1.2 This policy relates to the way in which members of the school community are treated, and the way that they treat others, with particular reference to the Equality Act's 'protected characteristics', namely:
- age;
 - disability;
 - gender reassignment;
 - marriage and civil partnership;
 - pregnancy and maternity;
 - race;
 - religion and belief;
 - sex; and
 - sexual orientation.
- 1.3 The policy applies to all aspects of employment with the Trust, including recruitment, pay and conditions, training, appraisal, restructuring and redundancy, conduct at work, capability, disciplinary and grievance procedures, managing attendance at work and termination of employment. However, the policy does not form part of a colleague's contract of employment and so it may be amended at any time.
- 1.4 The policy aims to:
- advance equality of opportunity, preparing students for life in a diverse society;
 - promote good relations amongst people within the Trust and across the communities in which partner schools are situated; and

- develop a strong, proactive approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the Trust’s action to address inhibiting factors relating to equality and diversity, thereby facilitating ongoing improvement in securing outstanding outcomes across the Trust.

2. Principles

2.1 SSMAT expects the following principles to guide practice across its partner schools and in all other operations:

- there is no discrimination against any member of the school community in relation to any of the ‘protected characteristics’ (as defined above);
- fairness and justice guide our actions (and we recognise that in order to achieve these goals, it is sometimes necessary to treat people differently);
- where reasonably practicable, all students are entitled to equal access to the full range of educational opportunities provided by the school;
- the school continuously monitors participation and learning outcomes in order to identify and address any form of indirect discrimination that may have created a barrier for some students;
- all processes relating to recruitment, appraisal and training, and pay and promotion providing opportunities for all colleagues to make a positive contribution on a transparently fair basis;
- every member of the community is valued as an individual, diversity is celebrated and respect is shown for people’s differences; and
- prejudicial and stereotypical views are challenged, in a professional, courteous but assertive manner, wherever they occur; but
- the Trust understands, and acknowledges, that behaviour characterised by prejudice and stereotyping is often related to ignorance and poor self-image, so that:
- through positive experiences and through supporting the expression of legitimate points of view, respectful social attitudes are developed.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Trust Board has overall responsibility for the Equal Opportunities Policy and for ensuring compliance with the law, as it related to discriminatory practice. The Executive Headteacher (in conjunction with the Trust Business Manager (TBM)) provide advice to Head of School and Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) and report to the Trust Board. As required, the Executive Headteacher and TBM consult with the Trust's HT providers.
- 3.2 The Executive Headteacher and TBM compile an aggregate document, summarising priorities, actions and outcomes in relation to equal opportunities - the Trust's 'Equalities Duty: Objectives and Actions' document. This is done in consultation with the Head of School and LGBs. The LGB and, in particular, the Head of School are also responsible for the local management of the Equal Opportunities Policy in their own school.
- 3.3 The Head of School is further responsible for ensuring that:
- all colleagues know and understand this policy and apply these policy guidelines in all situations;
 - all appointment panels give due regard to this policy (in conjunction with the Trust's Staff Recruitment Policy), to avoid any discriminatory practice;
 - the principles of equal opportunity are observed in curriculum development work and in designing and implementing staff training programmes;
 - respect for other people and celebration of diversity is apparent, and reinforced, in all areas of school life, e.g. through the assembly and tutorial programme and in everyday interactions; and
 - all incidents of discriminatory treatment are viewed and addressed with due concern (and recorded / reported to the Trust Board).
- 3.4 All colleagues are expected to treat all members of the school community fairly and with respect. Furthermore, they should challenge stereotypical representations of minority groups, including through the choice of learning resources. Moreover, colleagues should address any incidents of prejudice, e.g. racist comments, reporting these to a senior member of staff to enable a proper record to be taken and so that appropriate action to be taken.

4. Discrimination

- 4.1 Members of the school community to whom this policy applies (employees, students and governors/directors) must not discriminate against or harass other people,

including current and former employees, job applicants, clients, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (work-related activity) and on work-related trips or events, including social events.

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

- direct discrimination – treating someone less favourably on the basis of a ‘protected characteristic’;
- indirect discrimination – a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular ‘protected characteristic’ more than others, and is not justified;
- harassment – (in this context) behaviour (related to, or targeting, a ‘protected characteristic’) that has the purpose, or effect, of violating someone’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them (see also the Trust’s Bullying and Harassment Policy);
- victimisation – retaliation against someone who has complained about discriminatory practice, or has supported someone to do so
- disability discrimination – any unjustified, less favourable treatment (both direct and indirect discrimination) that relates to the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate the disadvantages caused by a disability.

5. Recruitment and selection

- 5.1 Recruitment, promotion and selection processes (including redundancy) are conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria in order to avoid discrimination. See the Staff Recruitment Policy, Pay Policy, Staff Appraisal Policy and Restructuring and Redundancy Policy for further detail, as applicable.
- 5.2 The Trust is required, by law, to ensure that all employees are authorised to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status must not be based on appearance or impressions of nationality. Regardless of their nationality, prospective employees must be able to produce original approved documents (e.g. passport) before employment starts, in order to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents can be accessed from the ‘Get Involved: Job Vacancies: Making an Application’ section of the Trust website.
- 5.3 SSMAT applies its Safeguarding Policy rigorously and applies the Rehabilitation of Offenders Exceptions Order to any applicant for an advertised post. This means that applicants will be asked to declare spent convictions as well as current ones. The

Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, also applies and requires Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) checks. For further information, see the Staff Recruitment Policy.

6. Training, promotion and conditions of service

- 6.1 All colleagues are given appropriate training opportunities to enable them to develop their practice and take advantage of promotion opportunities, with decisions made on the basis of merit. The appraisal process is used to identify individual training needs and to review its effectiveness.
- 6.2 Workforce composition, including the distribution of promoted posts across 'protected characteristic' groups, is regularly monitored and evaluated at Trust Board level. Where appropriate, steps are taken to remove barriers and more effectively recruit, and/or meet the needs of, under-represented groups. See the Trust's Staff Development and Succession Planning Policy and the Trust's Staff Recruitment Policy for more detail.
- 6.3 Conditions of service, staff benefits and organisational arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure that all colleagues are able to work effectively and there are no unlawful obstacles preventing access to some opportunities for some colleagues.

7. Termination of employment

- 7.1 The Trust ensures that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are neither directly, nor indirectly, discriminatory. See the Trust's Restructuring and Redundancy Policy for more detail.
- 7.2 Disciplinary and capability procedures and consequences are applied in a non-discriminatory way, regardless of the outcome.

8. Disability

- 8.1 Any colleague who has a disability and applies for a post is encouraged to explain their condition to the Appointing Officer / Panel, in order that proper consideration can be given regarding the support that could be provided.
- 8.2 Any colleague who becomes disabled during their period of employment with the Trust should discuss their circumstances and needs with their head of department / team leader and/or the Head of School (or other nominated member of senior staff), so that reasonable adjustments can be made. As appropriate, the support of the Trust's Occupational Health Service provider will be sought.

8.3 The Trust's Managing Attendance at Work Policy provides a mechanism through which periods of absence related to a colleague's disability can be discounted. See the Trust's Managing Attendance at Work Policy for further detail.

8.4 The physical features and accessibility of work premises are reviewed by the Executive Headteacher and Trust Business Manager and any factors that could place a person with a disability at a significant disadvantage are included in a school's (and the Trust's) Accessibility Plan. Where practicable (within budgetary constraints), steps are taken to improve access and movement around school sites.

9. Part-time and fixed-term work

9.1 Colleagues on part-time and fixed-term contracts are treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro rata basis, where appropriate), unless there are clear and justifiable reasons (in relation to the stated aims of the Trust, and consistent with employment law) to treat them differently.

10. Breaches of this policy

10.1 Breaches of this policy are dealt with in accordance with the Staff Discipline Policy. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may constitute gross misconduct and could result in dismissal.

10.2 Any colleague who believes that they have suffered discrimination can raise the matter through the Trust's Staff Grievance Policy, or through the Trust's Staff Bullying and Harassment Policy, as appropriate. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated, as appropriate.

10.3 There must be no victimisation or retaliation against colleagues who complain about discrimination and the Staff Discipline Policy will be employed in such circumstances. However, making a false allegation, deliberately and in bad faith, is treated as misconduct and treated as such in the Trust's disciplinary procedures.

11. Related policies / documents

11.1 This policy is related to the following Trust-wide policies:

- Equalities Duty: Objectives and Actions
- Staff Code of Conduct
- SSMAT Staff Handbook
- Staff Recruitment Policy

- Staff Appraisal Policy
- Pay Policy
- Staff Development and Succession Planning Policy;
- Staff Discipline Policy
- Staff Capability Policy
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Staff Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy
- Managing Attendance at Work Policy
- Time Off (other than Ill-Health) Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Stuart Jones; Nov. '22