Northern Lights
LEARNING TRUST

Equality Policy

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Person in charge: COO

Link Director: Chair of People and Wellbeing

Northern Lights Learning Trust

Signed off by: Chair of People and Wellbeing

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Pastoral Care/Spiritual Development

The quality of relationships between all members of school staff and pupils, and the relationship with parents and carers is the area that is most commonly associated with the ethos of the schools in our Trust. It is expressed in the terms of sharing and caring. In the Church schools in our Trust, we follow the teachings of:

‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ – Matthew 22:39.

‘This is my commandment: love each other’ - John 15:17.

In our schools we believe every pupil is an individual who is valued for who they are.

We have a series of overlapping networks of relationships, which includes governors, staff, children, parents, church members, and members of the community which the school seeks to serve. Our pastoral work will strive to meet the significant challenge to create and maintain such networks including in our Church schools in ways which reflect the Gospel. Those who are in leadership roles, which includes all who have a particular responsibility, ensure that by their personal example they set the highest standards expected.

It is from this premise that both Christian and spiritual love will pervade all aspects of life at Northern Lights Learning Trust. It will influence how we reward and teach discipline. It will affect how we value work and the achievements of pupils and staff. It will be seen in the way in which the school environments are created and cared for, in the way in which the needs of pupils, parents, and community are met, and in the way in which teaching and non-teaching staff work together effectively as a team. Pastoral care pervades all aspects of school life and therefore will be reflected in the way the schools are organised and the policies are written and implemented.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES	DATE OF CHANGES
No amendments	Autumn 2025

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1 Policy statement

1.1 The trust is fully committed to providing equal opportunities for all employees, workers and job applicants, and to eliminating unlawful and unfair discrimination. The Trust aims to create a culture that encourages and values diversity, and that appoints, rewards and promotes staff based on merit.

1.2 The Trust will not unlawfully discriminate against any employee, worker or job applicant because of any 'protected characteristic', namely:

1.2.1 age;

1.2.2 disability;

1.2.3 gender reassignment;

1.2.4 marriage or civil partnership status;

1.2.5 pregnancy and maternity;

1.2.6 race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin);

1.2.7 religion or belief;

1.2.8 sex; or

1.2.9 sexual orientation.

1.3 Equally, the Trust will not treat any employee, worker or job applicant less favourably because:

1.3.1 they are (or are not) a trade union member;

1.3.2 they work part-time or on a fixed-term basis;

1.3.3 of their socio-economic background; or

1.3.4 they have caring responsibilities.

2 Introduction

2.1 The statement in paragraph 1 sets out the Trust's commitment to ensuring that all staff and job applicants have equal opportunities.

The remainder of this document sets out the Trust's policy on equality and diversity, in particular:

2.1.1 what the Trust regards as acceptable behaviour at work, and what is not acceptable;

2.1.2 the rights and responsibilities of those to whom the policy applies;

2.1.3 the procedure for dealing with concerns or complaints;

2.1.4 how the School will deal with any breach of this policy;

2.1.5 who is responsible for the policy; and

2.1.6 how it will be implemented, monitored and reviewed.

2.2 This policy applies to employees (including teaching and non-teaching staff), temporary and supply/agency workers, interns, volunteers, apprentices and job applicants. All staff are responsible for ensuring that there is no discrimination in the workplace, as outlined in the policy statement set out at paragraph 1, and for ensuring that this policy is applied on a day-to-day basis. They are also expected to apply the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in their interactions with pupils, visitors and any other third party in connection with the school. In certain circumstances, an employee can be personally liable for discrimination against a fellow employee or a job applicant. For information on responsibilities, see paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 below.

2.3 This policy has been drafted to ensure that it is workable, clear and easy to understand. This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend, update or supplement it from time to time. We will circulate any new or modified policy to staff when it is adopted.

2.4 This policy sets out the principles that should be applied to ensure equal opportunities in the areas of:

2.4.1 recruitment and selection (see paragraph 6);

2.4.2 promotion, appraisal, transfer and training (see paragraph 7);

2.4.3 terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services (see paragraph 8); and

2.4.4 grievance and disciplinary procedures, dismissals, resignations and redundancies (see paragraph 9).

2.5 This policy should be considered alongside other Trust policies, such as those dealing with harassment and bullying, sexual harassment, family leave (maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental, parental), emergency time off for dependants and flexible working, copies of which are available on EVERY. A written copy can also be requested from your school office.

3 Equality principles

3.1 As set out in the policy statement, there should be no discrimination in the workplace because of any of the protected characteristics or other factors set out in the policy statement in paragraph 1 above. The types of discrimination that are prohibited are explained at paragraph 3.2 below.

3.2 For the purposes of this policy 'discrimination' includes direct and indirect discrimination and other 'prohibited conduct' under the Equality Act 2010. Discrimination may take the form of:

3.2.1 **Direct discrimination**—this is treating someone less favourably (or, in the case of pregnancy and maternity, unfavourably) because of a protected characteristic. An example of this would be paying someone less because of their sex or because they belong to a particular racial group. 'Because of' is very wide and will cover behaviour that takes place, for example because of sexual orientation, even if the person is not in fact gay, and even if the perpetrator knows that they are not gay. It also includes less favourable treatment because someone is associated with another person who has a protected characteristic, e.g. because a worker is the primary carer for a disabled child. Such treatment is unlawful unless, in relation to age only, it can be objectively justified, i.e. the employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim;

3.2.2 **Indirect discrimination**—this is treating a group of people in the same way, but in a way which adversely affects those with a protected characteristic. An example of this would be telling all employees that they have to work late at night—although applied to everyone, it will adversely affect those employees with childcare responsibilities, and these tend to be women. Such treatment is unlawful unless it can be objectively justified;

3.2.3 **Victimisation**—this is treating someone less favourably because they have alleged discrimination or asserted their right not to be discriminated against because of a protected characteristic. An example of this would be a disabled employee claiming that they had been discriminated against, who is then refused a reference by their manager because of that claim;

3.2.4 **Harassment**—this is unwanted conduct, related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone or violating their dignity. Harassment may also be of a sexual nature. It may also occur where someone harasses the victim, the victim either rejects or submits to the harassment and, because of that rejection or submission, that person then treats the victim less favourably. More information on what can constitute harassment is set out in the Company's harassment and bullying policy available from the HR department;

3.2.5 In the case of disability only, **discrimination arising from disability**—this is unfavourable treatment of the disabled person because of something arising in consequence of their disability. Such treatment is unlawful unless it can be objectively justified;

3.2.6 In the case of disability only, **the duty to make reasonable adjustments**— this duty comprises three requirements, each of which arises where a disabled person is put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a 'relevant matter':

(a) the first is a requirement, where a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage;

(b) the second is a requirement, where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage; and

(c) the third is a requirement, where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to provide the auxiliary aid.

3.3 The School will appoint, train, develop, reward and promote staff on the basis of merit and ability.

3.4 **The principles set out in this policy apply:**

3.4.1 in the workplace; and

3.4.2 outside the workplace in a work-related context, such as on school trips, student related events or work-related social events

3.5 Special responsibility for the practical application of the Trust's equality policy falls upon managers, and any staff involved in the recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion and training of employees and the way their terms of employment are fixed.

3.6 The Trust will appoint a senior level manager to be responsible for this policy, its implementation, monitoring and review.

3.7 If you have any doubt or concern about this policy, or how it should be applied in any particular instance or situation, please contact your SLT as soon as possible. The central team will support SLT with any queries when necessary.

3.8 If you believe you have been unfairly treated in breach of this policy, you should follow the NLLT Grievance Procedure, which is available EVERY. The harassment complaints procedure set out in NLLT's harassment and bullying policy is also available to any employee who believes that they may have been harassed or bullied. Employees will not be victimised in any way for making such a complaint in good faith. Complaints of this nature will be dealt with seriously, in confidence and as soon as possible.

3.9 The school will not tolerate behaviour that goes against this policy, and where an employee is alleged to have breached this policy, they will be subject to the school’s disciplinary procedure. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have breached this policy. Serious breaches of this policy, acts of unlawful discrimination and serious incidents of harassment and bullying will be treated as gross misconduct. Unwarranted allegations that are not made in good faith may also be

considered as a disciplinary matter. The School will keep confidential records of ongoing matters dealt with in accordance with this policy.

4 Implementation

4.1 This equality policy will be included in induction packs for new staff and available to all staff via the policy section of EVERY. A paper version of this policy is available from your school office.

4.2 The Trust will also provide staff training on the policy or arrange for the policy to be presented to staff at team meetings when it is implemented, and on a regular ongoing basis.

4.3 The Trust will ensure that all managers and supervisors with responsibility for any of the aspects of the employment relationship listed in paragraph 2.4 above are provided with more detailed training on how to manage equality and diversity issues in the workplace. Other staff may also be required to attend equality and diversity training. Attendance at training will be compulsory if you are notified that you should attend a course.

4.4 Training may include:

4.4.1 an outline of the law covering the protected characteristics and discrimination;

4.4.2 why the School has introduced this policy and how it will be put into practice;

4.4.3 examples of what is and is not acceptable conduct in the workplace;

4.4.4 the risk of condoning or seeming to approve inappropriate behaviour, and the risk of personal liability;

4.4.5 how prejudice can affect the way an employer functions and the impact that generalisations, stereotypes, bias or inappropriate language in day-to-day operations can have on people's chances of obtaining work, promotion, recognition and respect; and

4.4.6 the equality monitoring process.

4.5 Training will be designed in consultation with the Trust's staff, workplace representatives and managers, incorporating feedback from previous training. If inhouse trainers are used, the Trust will ensure that they themselves receive training. External trainers will be fully informed about this policy and other relevant trust and school policies.

5 Monitoring and review

5.1 The central team will regularly monitor the effectiveness of this policy to ensure that it is working in practice and that the aims set out in the policy statement are being met. Monitoring will include the key areas of:

5.1.1 recruitment and promotion, including the range of people applying for work;

5.1.2 pay and benefits;

5.1.3 training;

5.1.4 appraisals;

5.1.5 disciplinary and grievance matters;

5.1.6 dismissals and reasons for resigning.

5.2 The Trust will report back to managers, staff and worker representatives on progress, and whether the objectives of this policy are being achieved.

5.3 In order to monitor diversity in these areas, the Trust will need to process personal data and special category data (formerly known as 'sensitive personal data') in accordance with its GDPR *data protection policy and Privacy notice*.

5.4 The Trust will review this policy and related procedures and practices on equality and diversity annually.

6 Recruitment and selection

6.1 The Trust will apply the following principles in recruiting or selecting for positions, whether externally or internally:

6.1.1 individuals will be assessed according to their personal capability to carry out a given job;

6.1.2 assumptions will not be made that only certain types of person will be able to perform certain types of work; 6.1.3 the required level of skills, knowledge or qualifications will not be overstated;

6.1.4 avoid specifying an age requirement—while there may be instances where this can be objectively justified, these are likely to be rare; if considering an age limit for a particular post, managers should consult the HR advisor who the trust purchase Employment and HR advice under SLA.

6.1.5 avoid asking for 'so many years' experience'—again, this will amount to indirect discrimination unless it can be objectively justified;

6.1.6 avoid recruiting only internally or by word of mouth unless there is a good reason for doing so—advertising more broadly may help increase applications from a more diverse pool of talent;

6.1.7 selection tests should be specifically related to job requirements and should measure the person's actual or inherent ability to do or train for the work;

6.1.8 review selection tests regularly to ensure they remain relevant and free from any unjustifiable bias, either in content or in scoring mechanism;

6.1.9 process all applications in the same way and ask the same questions at interview;

6.1.10 keep written records of interviews and reasons for appointment and non-appointment.;

6.1.11 ensure that questions at interview relate to the requirements of the job;

6.1.12 if a provision, criterion or practice for recruitment and selection puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage for a reason connected with their disability, ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to eliminate or, if that is not reasonably practicable, reduce the disadvantage. This could, for example, mean making different interview arrangements for an applicant with mobility problems or arranging for facilities for applicants with sight or hearing impairments; and

6.1.13 decisions regarding the method of recruitment or selection or who is recruited or selected should only be made by a person who has read and understood this policy and undergone relevant training.

7 Promotion, transfer and training

7.1 The Trust will apply the following principles to appointments for promotion, transfer and training:

7.1.1 examine assessment criteria and appraisal schemes carefully to ensure that they are not discriminatory, whether directly or indirectly;

7.1.2 monitor assessment criteria and appraisal schemes and, where such criteria or schemes result in predominantly one group of workers gaining access to promotion, transfer or training or being awarded a particular appraisal grade, check them to make sure this is not due to any hidden or indirect discrimination;

7.1.3 monitor promotion and career development patterns to ensure that access to promotion, training and career development opportunities is not denied to particular groups or types of workers;

7.1.4 avoid traditional qualifications and requirements for promotion, transfer and training, such as length of service, years of experience or age unless they can be objectively justified by reference to the job requirements;

7.1.5 ensure that policies and practices regarding selection for training, day release and personal development do not result in an imbalance in training between groups of workers; and

7.1.6 if any provision, criterion or practice relating to promotion, appraisal, transfer or training puts disabled workers at a substantial disadvantage for a reason connected with their disability, ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to eliminate or, if that is not reasonably practicable, reduce the disadvantage. For example, this could be making training available for a disabled worker in a different way, in a different location or at a different time.

8 Terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services

8.1 The Trust will apply the following principles to terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services:

8.1.1 review the terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services available to workers to ensure that they are provided in a way which is free from unlawful discrimination;

8.1.2 ensure that part-time workers receive pay, benefits, facilities and services on a pro-rata basis to their full-time comparator unless otherwise objectively justified—managers who are responsible for part-time workers should, in particular, take advice from HR advisor who the trust purchase Employment and HR advice under SLA when assessing pay and benefits for part-time workers;

8.1.3 if any provision, criterion or practice relating to terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services puts disabled workers at a substantial disadvantage due to a reason connected with their disability, ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to eliminate or, if that is not reasonably practicable, reduce the disadvantage. Managers responsible for disabled workers should, in particular, take advice from HR advisor who the trust purchase Employment and HR advice under SLA when assessing pay and benefits for disabled workers;

8.1.4 examine carefully and monitor pay and bonus criteria, policies and practices and, if it appears that any group of workers are disadvantaged by them, check them to make sure that this is not due to any hidden or indirect discrimination; and

8.1.5 comply with its obligations in respect of gender pay gap reporting (if any) and devise and implement an action plan with the aim of reducing any gender pay gap.

9 Grievances, disciplinary procedures, dismissals and redundancies

9.1 Workers who, in good faith, bring a grievance (or assist another to do so) either under this policy or otherwise in relation to an equality or equal opportunities matter will not be disciplined, dismissed or otherwise suffer any adverse treatment for having done so.

9.2 No member of a particular group of workers will be disciplined or dismissed for performance or behaviour which would be overlooked or condoned in another group, unless there is genuine and lawful justification for different treatment.

9.3 Redundancy criteria and procedures will be carefully examined to ensure that they are not applied and do not operate in an unlawfully discriminatory manner.

9.4 The provision of any voluntary redundancy benefits will be equally available to all workers unless there is a genuine and lawful justification for doing otherwise.

10 Considerations relating to disability

10.1 Disabled people, including job applicants and employees, should be able to participate in all of the school's activities fully, on an equal basis with people who are not disabled.

10.2 Due to the wide variety of potential disabilities, and the likelihood of a disability affecting different people in different ways, the Trust does not prescribe rigid rules on how issues concerning disabled people should be dealt with. What is essential is that all Headteachers and line managers take all reasonably practical steps to ensure that disabled people are not less favourably treated or disadvantaged by comparison to people who are not disabled in relation to their work, working environment, or by any provision, criterion or practice used by the school. Managers and supervisors need to be aware in particular that an employee on long-term sick leave or with intermittent sickness absence may be disabled.

10.3 The Trust is particularly concerned that disabled workers are treated equally in the following areas:

10.3.1 recruitment and selection;

10.3.2 promotion, transfer and training;

10.3.3 terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services; and

10.3.4 dismissals, resignations and redundancies.

10.4 For the purpose of this policy, a disability is a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect upon a person's ability to carry out normal day-today activities. Cancer, HIV infection and multiple sclerosis are disabilities from the point of diagnosis.

10.5 Some disabilities are immediately obvious, for example use of a wheelchair, while other disabilities may not be apparent at all, for example HIV infection. Certain conditions are not considered to be disabilities, for example poor eyesight that is corrected simply by wearing prescription spectacles, or addiction to alcohol or other substances. If you would like further information about whether a particular condition is a disability, you should contact your SLT who may seek advice from the HR advisor who the trust purchase Employment and HR advice under SLA from.

10.6 The general equality and equal opportunity principles set out earlier in this policy will apply in relation to disabled people whether they currently have a disability or have had a disability in the past.

10.7 The Trust will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that disabled people are able to participate in its business and activities on an equal basis with people who are not disabled.