

People Directorate

Trust Equality Policy



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1 Sept 2026	3	Full rewrite: simplified language; aligned with Trust DEIB work, Tactical Group feedback, Central Voice feedback and updated governance/measurement approach



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1. Our Promise

At Thinking Schools Academy Trust, we want every person in our community to feel safe, respected, included and able to belong.

Equality means treating people fairly and removing barriers that may stop someone from taking part, achieving well or feeling valued. Equity means recognising that people may need different support to have fair access to opportunity. Diversity strengthens how we think, learn and work. Inclusion is how we make belonging real in everyday relationships, decisions and practice.

This policy explains how the Trust promotes diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) for students, staff, families and the wider community.

2. How This Policy Fits With The School Equality Policy

The Trust has one overarching equality policy and two school-level policies. They are designed to work together, not separately.

Document	Purpose
Trust Equality Policy	Sets the Trust-wide principles, legal framework, governance, data approach and annual DEIB measures.
School Equality Policy - Students	Explains what equality, inclusion and belonging look like for students in schools.
School Equality Policy - Staff	Explains what equality, inclusion and belonging look like for staff, applicants and people working in schools.
DEIB best-practice webpage	Provides practical examples, templates, guidance and resources for schools and central teams.

How to use the policies

The Trust policy provides the shared framework. Schools should use the student and staff policies to explain local practice, set 2-3 measurable equality objectives overall, and report progress through the agreed governance route.

3. Who This Policy Applies To

- All Trust students
- All employees
- Job applicants, volunteers, contractors and agency workers
- Parents, carers and families

- Local governing bodies, Trustees and Members
- Visitors, partners and people working with the Trust

4. Our Legal Duty

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination. The Trust must also meet the Public Sector Equality Duty by having due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advance equality of opportunity
3. Foster good relations between different groups.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

For students in schools, the protected characteristics that apply in the pupil context are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Age and marriage/civil partnership do not apply to pupils in schools in the same way, but we will still consider age, stage, family circumstances and lived experience when planning inclusive practice.

We also recognise wider factors that can shape people's experience of belonging and opportunity, including neurodiversity, SEND, language, socio-economic background, educational background, caring responsibilities, chronic illness, menopause and individual life experience. Some of these may also relate to protected characteristics.

5. Our Trust Equality Commitments

- Every person is valuable and deserves dignity, respect and fairness.
- Difference strengthens our schools, services and communities.
- Barriers should be identified, understood and removed wherever possible.
- Belonging is actively created through relationships, leadership, voice and culture.
- Data, feedback and lived experience should lead to practical action.

6. The 7 Principles of Inclusion

The Trust's 7 Principles of Inclusion support our approach to inclusive culture.

They were developed primarily for student inclusion and classroom practice, but they also provide a helpful lens for staff belonging when they are used with the right context.

Principle	Plain-English meaning
Diversity is a strength	Difference brings perspective, identity, experience and insight.
Equity, not equality	People may need different support to have fair access to opportunity.
Community is a verb	Belonging is something we actively build together.
Attachment is teachable	Trusting relationships help people feel safe and connected.
Behaviour is a language	Behaviour or disengagement may signal barriers, needs or concerns.
Metacognition matters	Reflection helps people understand themselves, others and the impact of decisions.
Attendance is a window	Attendance, absence, turnover and engagement can help us understand belonging and barriers.

7. What People Can Expect From Us

Students can expect to learn in a school where they are safe, included, listened to and supported to take part. Staff can expect to work in an environment where they are treated fairly, able to speak up, supported with reasonable adjustments and given fair access to opportunities.

8. How We Make This Real For Students

- Use student data, student voice and school knowledge to identify barriers and gaps.
- Support students with SEND, disability, neurodiversity, EAL, disadvantage and other needs.
- Promote inclusive teaching, reasonable adjustments and high expectations for all.
- Develop curriculum and resources that reflect diverse identities and experiences.
- Monitor attendance, behaviour, bullying and participation to identify patterns and respond fairly.
- Make enrichment, leadership and wider opportunities accessible wherever possible.
- Work with families and communities to support inclusion and belonging.

9. How We Make This Real For Staff

- Use fair and inclusive recruitment, selection, pay and progression processes.
- Offer reasonable adjustments and individual support where needed.
- Support flexible working, wellbeing and key life stages such as maternity, caring responsibilities, menopause and later career planning.
- Monitor workforce data, including recruitment, retention, pay, progression, training and staff experience.
- Strengthen inclusive leadership, psychological safety and staff voice.
- Recognise the contribution of school and central staff through everyday appreciation and Trust recognition approaches.
- Use gender pay gap and wider workforce insight to identify practical actions for improvement.

10. Voice, Feedback and Psychological Safety

We want staff and students to feel able to share ideas, ask questions, raise concerns and challenge respectfully. Psychological safety does not mean everyone will always agree; it means people can contribute without fear of unfair treatment, dismissal or being labelled as difficult.

Feedback should not rely only on who feels able to speak in a large meeting. Leaders should use a range of routes, including surveys, staff voice, student voice, after-meeting feedback, line management, team discussions and consultation groups.

Where feedback is gathered, we will aim to close the loop by explaining what has been considered, what will change, and where change is not possible. At least one clear “you said, we did” response should be published each year through staff survey, Staff Voice, Headteacher/HoS feedback or DEIB consultation.

11. Data and Insight

The Trust will use data and insight to understand representation, inclusion and equitable experience. This includes workforce data, student outcomes, staff and student voice, training participation, incidents, complaints, attendance, behaviour, progression and pay information where relevant.

Workforce diversity information is voluntary. Staff will be told why the data is being collected, how it will be used, and how confidentiality will be protected. Any reporting will normally be anonymised and aggregated so that individuals cannot be identified.

Some information, such as disability declarations or support needs, may be shared with appropriate leaders or HR colleagues where this is necessary to provide reasonable adjustments or support.

12. Equality Objectives and Annual DEIB Measures

The Trust will set and review a small number of DEIB measures each year. For 2026/27, the proposed measures are:

- Implementation of the updated Trust, student and staff equality policies
- Improved voluntary ethnicity and disability disclosure
- 95% completion of agreed DEIB/EDI training for relevant staff
- At least one clear “you said, we did” response from survey or feedback
- DEIB governance responsibilities finalised and communicated
- A DEIB best-practice webpage published and maintained
- Schools have 2-3 measurable equality objectives in place and reviewed annually.

12.1 Equality objectives

Each school will set 2-3 measurable equality objectives overall. These objectives may focus on students, staff or both, depending on the school context and the evidence available. Schools do not need to set 2-3 separate objectives in each school policy unless they choose to do so.

Objectives should be reviewed annually and refreshed at least every four years. Each objective should include a baseline, action, owner, measure and review date.

Examples of Trust-level objectives

- Improve voluntary ethnicity and disability disclosure from the current baseline by the end of the academic year.
- Implement the updated equality policy framework and support all schools to set measurable objectives.
- Strengthen staff belonging and psychological safety through staff voice, leadership development and feedback loops.
- Use gender pay gap and workforce data to identify practical action on recruitment, progression and representation.

13. Governance and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Trust Board	Holds overall accountability for equality compliance, DEIB strategy and policy approval.
People Committee / relevant Trust governance route	Receives DEIB updates, workforce data, gender pay gap information and progress against measures.
Executive and People Directorate	Lead Trust-wide implementation, data, training, guidance and reporting.
DEIB Tactical Group	Reviews feedback and data, shapes practical actions, and supports delivery of DEIB priorities.
Local Governing Bodies	Provide strategic oversight of school equality objectives and local implementation.
SEND & Equality Link Governor	Supports scrutiny of student equality, SEND, accessibility and pupil inclusion.
Recruitment, Workload, Diversity & Wellbeing Link Governor	Supports scrutiny of staff equality, recruitment, workload, wellbeing and workplace inclusion.
School leaders	Implement the policies locally, monitor data and culture, and respond to concerns.
All staff and students	Contribute to a respectful, inclusive and welcoming community.

Governance principle

Student DEIB and staff DEIB are different areas and should retain clear oversight. DEIB should not simply be absorbed into already broad governor roles without clarity. The Trust will clarify how the two routes connect so that DEIB is seen strategically as a whole.

14. Checking The Impact of Decisions

When we make important decisions or change policies, we will consider how different groups may be affected. This helps us identify barriers, avoid unintended disadvantage and improve outcomes. This may be recorded through an Equality Impact Assessment, decision record, consultation summary, minutes or another proportionate method.

15. Concerns and Breaches

Concerns about discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation or unfair treatment will be taken seriously and handled through the relevant procedure. This may include the behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, complaints procedure, grievance policy, dignity at work procedure, safeguarding procedures or whistleblowing policy, depending on the concern.

16. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every four years, or earlier if legislation, guidance or Trust needs change. Progress will be reviewed through annual DEIB measures, equality objectives, data analysis, staff and student voice, and governance reporting.

17. Related Policies and Guidance

- School Equality Policy - Students
- School Equality Policy - Staff
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
- Accessibility Plan
- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies
- Attendance and Admissions policies
- Safeguarding policies
- Recruitment and DBS Policy
- Flexible Working, Family Leave and Wellbeing policies
- Dignity at Work, Grievance, Disciplinary and Whistleblowing policies
- DEIB best-practice webpage