



## Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

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## **Introduction, and Legal Context**

Melrose Education is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion and actively supports practices that promote genuine opportunities for all staff and learners across its schools. Melrose Education is committed to promoting a positive and diverse culture in which all staff and learners are valued and supported to fulfil their potential irrespective of any protected characteristic. Melrose Education recognises its obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and are committed to promoting the equality and diversity of all those we work with especially our staff, learners, families, and visitors. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, bullying, and harassment and will make every effort to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and its subsequent provisions.

This policy and all associated procedures also apply to all staff including volunteers, learners including those on placement, and visitors at our schools and should be read in conjunction with the following Melrose School policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND and Welfare
- Admissions
- Uniform (where applicable)
- Behaviour
- Exclusions
- Complaints
- Accessibility Plan
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Anti-Bullying

Failure to comply with these policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action. Discriminatory treatment, bullying or harassment of staff or learners by visitors is not tolerated.

## **Information, and Objectives**

Melrose Education will work across its school communities to analyse data and existing practices to set out the actions taken in compliance of the Equality Act 2010, and to inform the setting of relevant EDI objectives to support the development of each school and its community. These will be set out in an Individual school EDI Information and Objectives plan managed by the school's EDI Lead.

## **Compliance**

This policy has been developed in response to the Equality Act 2010 and replaces previous policies relating to race, gender, and disability equality. It has been designed to help the school meet its objectives and duties such as:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other prohibited conduct.
- Advancing opportunity in an equitable way between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Ensuring adherence to the Equality Act 2010 which defines nine protected characteristics which may be applicable to our staff, learners, and wider school community.
  - Age (as an employer but not applicable to learners)
  - Disability
  - Sex
  - Gender reassignment
  - Race
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Religion or belief
  - Sexual orientation

The following groups have been identified as key recipients in terms of the implementation of this policy in schools:

- Learners with SEND including autism
- Looked after children or children in need
- Children at risk of exclusion
- Children from an ethnic group, including those from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller backgrounds
- Children missing in education
- Children with medical conditions affecting attendance at school
- School age/teenage parents
- Young carers
- Children within, or at risk of joining, the criminal justice system
- Children with mental health issues
- Children in receipt of free school meals
- Children living in areas of deprivation
- Those who are classed as gifted and talented
- Are gender questioning or going through transition
- Children who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual
- Children who are non-binary or transgender

*This list is not exhaustive.*

All staff associated with the school (including school community boards, Melrose Education central office team, peripatetic tutors, therapists etc) will:

- Actively promote opportunity in an equitable way in all areas of school life.
- Ensure that members of the school community know their rights and respect the rights of others.
- Aim to ensure that prejudice or discrimination in all its forms is actively rejected.
- Raise awareness of equality issues for all members of the school community.
- Establish strategies to ensure equal access to the curriculum and enable each learner is able to fulfil their potential regardless of ability, gender, race, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.

Equality and diversity principles based on the above aims will be embedded in our daily practices, policies, and the processes of decision-making, including:

- Admissions, induction, and attendance.
- Learners' progress, and achievement.
- Learners' personal development, and wellbeing, particularly in relation to safeguarding.
- Parent involvement.
- Working with the wider community.
- Behaviour management, staff recruitment, and professional development.
- Curriculum access, and participation.
- Teaching styles, and strategies.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Directors have overall responsibility for this policy and for ensuring compliance. The designated senior member of staff with overall responsibility for all EDI matters at each school is the Principal supported by an appointed EDI Lead. The Company EDI Lead is Helen Dyer.

It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- Treat colleagues, learners, and visitors with dignity and respect; and avoid behaving in any manner that may give rise to claims of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.
- Support and participate in any measures introduced to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Actively challenge discrimination, and disadvantage in accordance with their responsibilities.
- Report immediately any issues associated with EDI in accordance with this policy.

**Duty to Make Reasonable Adjustments**

Melrose Education will actively seek, as far as is reasonable, to make reasonable adjustments, where there is a need to ensure that a disabled person has the same access to everything as a non-disabled person. We will also take positive and proactive steps to remove, reduce, or prevent the obstacles faced by a disabled individual.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments covers all aspects of school life, including the curriculum, classroom organisation, and timetabling, access to facilities, clubs, and visits, sports, and policies.

Melrose Education will monitor the physical features of the company's premises to consider whether disabled users of the premises are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other users. Where possible and proportionate, Melrose Education will take steps to improve access for disabled users of the premises. Please see each school's Accessibility Plan for further information.

At each Melrose School, we will work closely with parents to ensure that the needs and provision required with respect to learners' special education needs – as identified in the Education, Health, and Care plan (EHCP) are met, where possible.

In making reasonable adjustments, Melrose Education is required to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled learners. Staff will carefully consider any proposals made by parents and will not unreasonably refuse any requests for such aids and services.

**Uniform**

The Uniform Policy in each school applies equally to all learners, irrespective of their gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or maternity, religion, or belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare.

However, we will consider reasonable requests to alter the uniform, for example for genuine religious requirements, and in making reasonable adjustments for disabled children to avoid substantial disadvantage.

Certain items of jewellery, such as the Kara bangle, and certain items of headwear, such as the turban and headscarves may be worn by learners when doing so is genuinely based on manifesting religious or racial beliefs or identity. Where there is uncertainty as to whether an item may be worn, the issue must be referred to the school principal, whose decision will be final, subject to the complaints procedure.

We subscribe to the Halo Collective and welcome afro-textured hair worn in all styles, including but not limited to, afros, locs, twists, braids, cornrows, fades, hair straightened through the application of heat or chemicals, weaves, wigs, headscarves, and wraps. However, if staff are supporting a child who is at increased risk to pull or grab hair, appropriate consideration should be made, and appropriate measures put into place to reduce risk of harm to staff which may mean covering or securing loose hair.

**Admissions Policy**

Admissions criteria are defined under each school's policy and are applied consistently to every young person, irrespective of any protected characteristic.

**Religious Beliefs**

Melrose Education respects the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, learners, and parents, and each Melrose school will comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice, wherever possible. An example where a request may be refused is if the religious

observance takes place during lesson time. Whilst the school will explore other ways to accommodate the request, such as amended timetabling, this may not always be possible.

### **Curriculum Delivery**

Each school's curriculum is crucial to tackling inequalities for learners including gender stereotyping, preventing bullying, and raising attainment for certain groups. The principles of equality and diversity are embedded in all our academic and social curriculums. Positive and proactive steps will be taken to prevent discrimination against, or victimisation of, any learner in the provision of education or access to any benefit, facility, or service including educational trips, work experience, and leisure activities.

Melrose Education recognises and promotes awareness of the possibility of bias (for example, gender or racial) and works to eliminate such bias in both teaching and learning materials and pedagogical approaches. Materials are carefully selected for all areas of the curriculum to avoid stereotypes and bias.

Melrose Education, and its' schools, may take positive action to give learners of a particular racial group, or learners with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the needs of the learners in that group, for example, special language training for groups whose first language is not English.

All learners are encouraged to work with, socialise, and have respect for, all other learners, irrespective of any protected characteristics, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered towards all groups in society through the individual school curricula and ethos, and learners are encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.

### **Gender Identity**

Melrose Education is mindful of its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 towards learners identifying as transgender and non-binary.

In respect of learners identifying as transgender or non-binary, we will be sensitive to their individual needs whilst also recognising the needs and sensitivities of other learners. Learners who have confirmed that they have commenced the process of transitioning, and, therefore, fall under the protected characteristic of gender-reassignment will be provided with appropriate pastoral care and support.

We will respond to the wishes of a learner to be known by a preferred name and/or to change their preferred pronouns, ideally with parental consent. However, if the learner so wishes to change their preferred name/pronouns and are deemed by staff as Gillick competent (under 16, but able to consent for themselves), we will honour this. We will always encourage learners to involve parents and will work collaboratively with parents to explore any concerns the learner or parent may have. No changes will be made to the school's systems in respect of legal names or gender unless parental consent is gained, and the necessary legal documentation is provided.

### **Recruitment and Selection**

All employees, whether part-time, full-time, temporary, or permanent will be treated fairly and equally. We will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline, and selection for redundancy. Selections will be made based on aptitude, ability, and/or merit, where appropriate.

Where appropriate, we will endeavour to make all reasonable and effective adjustments during the recruitment and selection process. Where recruitment and selection is carried out by a third party, on our behalf, we will take all reasonable steps to ensure they adhere to the principles of this policy.

**Reporting and Recording Incidents of Discrimination and Harassment**

All incidents of discriminatory treatment, bullying, and harassment must be reported to senior staff and recorded as soon as is reasonably possible (and in any event within 24 hours of the incident). All bullying-related incidents (confirmed or otherwise) will be addressed in accordance with our Anti-Bullying Policy.

**Complaints and Grievances**

If an individual believes that they have been discriminated against, harassed or victimised, they are asked to follow our complaints or grievance procedure (as appropriate).

**Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The designated senior member of staff with overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of this EDI Policy, in each school, is the Principal supported by the School EDI Lead.

Additional support can also be provided to any parent or significant person, wishing to know more about the policy and procedures outlined above. A copy of this policy document is available on request.

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed and monitored on a regular basis, using feedback from learners, parents, staff, and other stakeholders, and an assessment of progress against targets identified in each school's Equality Information and Objectives document will be made.