

# Equality & Diversity Policy

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Lime Trust 2026



## **Policy: Equality & Diversity Policy: Staff**

**Date of Policy: March 2026**

**Date of Renewal: April 2029**

## **LIME Trust Vision & Values**

*Putting Learners First* is our Trust vision.

We aim to create a nurturing and supportive learning environment for all, encouraging our learners to achieve academic excellence and reach their full potential. We set high expectations and build capacity-rich schools through facilitating school-to-school collaboration. The high challenge we put forward is met with equally high support from our team of education experts, so we continue to improve our children's lives and futures – especially for disadvantaged pupils.

Our values are based on R.E.S.P.E.C.T. which means we believe that:

**R**espect is built on unconditional positive regard for all learners, all employees, and our wider communities.

**E**quity enables everyone to be treated as individuals. It removes barriers, provides opportunity and celebrates difference.

**S**elf-worth creates a culture where all learners, all employees and our wider community have pride in their contributions and feel confident and valued.

**P**artnership is working together for the common good, ensuring that our learners are at the heart of all that we do.

**E**njoyment is feeling happy, safe and motivated to make a positive contribution.

**C**ommunication provides a voice for all, creating a shared understanding through dialogue.

**T**rust is a partnership which requires us to act with integrity. Be brave, honest and kind.



## Governance

Where a policy refers to the responsibility of the Trust Board for monitoring, scrutiny or quality assurance, these may be delegated to one of the teams below through their governance processes:

- School Improvement Team Governance, who directly report to the Education Curriculum and Standards Committee
- Operations Team Governance, who directly report to the Finance Risk and Audit Committee
- External and internal audits reported to the Trust Board

At the Lime Trust, we are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all our workforce regardless of class, disability, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, family make-up, belief (religious or non-religious), or any other individual special need.

## Introduction

We pride ourselves on being an inclusive Trust, where we celebrate diversity and difference, and acknowledge the richness that this brings to our school communities. We aim to provide opportunities for all employees and job applicants regardless of sex, gender identity and reassignment, sexual orientation, race, age, disability, religion or belief, pregnancy/maternity and marital/partnership status.

Each of our academies is led by the Lime Trust values. Our values encourage all stakeholders to display the behaviours expected of a member of our workforce: **Respect, Equity, Self-worth, Partnership, Enjoyment, Communication** (a voice for all), **Trust**. All members of our community are of equal worth.

This policy is an umbrella policy, which covers, and is inseparably linked to, every other Trust/school policy, including equal opportunities, safeguarding, health and safety, recruitment and selection policies.

We believe that the Equality Act provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards, as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Our approach to equality is based on the following 5 key principles:

1. **All employees are of equal value.** Whether or not they are disabled; whatever their age; whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status; whatever their sex, gender and gender identity, and sexual orientation; whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background.
2. **We recognise, respect and value difference, and understand and promote the idea that diversity is a strength.** We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face, in relation to disability, age, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief or faith. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
3. **We foster positive attitudes and relationships.** We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.
4. **We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging.** We want all members of our workforce to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community. Also, to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully within the Trust and our schools.
5. **We observe good equalities practice for our staff.** We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.

The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which our staff treat visitors, volunteers, contractors and former staff members.



This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades within our Trust, including senior managers, full/part-time and permanent/fixed-term employees, trainees, volunteers, agency staff (collectively referred to as 'employees', 'staff' or 'workers' in this policy) and all tiers within our Trust governance structure (i.e., Members, Trustees).

## Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as 'protected characteristics'). The term "protected characteristics" is used in order to identify groups potentially at risk of "unlawful behaviour"

As an employer, the Trust cannot discriminate against our staff, or treat them less favourably because of their:

- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage/civil partnership
- pregnancy/maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- Sex
- sexual orientation

### What is unlawful behaviour?

The "unlawful behaviour" outline in the Equality Act 2010 includes:

- direct discrimination
- indirect discrimination
- discrimination arising from disability.
- harassment
- victimisation

The Act requires all public organisations, including schools, to comply with the Public-Sector Equality Duty and two further specific duties:

1. The Public-Sector Equality Duty or 'general duty': this requires all public organisations, including schools, to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between different groups.
  - Foster good relations between different groups.
2. Two 'specific duties': these require all public organisations, including schools, to:
  - Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty.
  - Publish specific and measurable Equality objectives at least every 4 years.

The Equality Act also applies to schools in their role as employers, and the way the Trust complies with this can be found in our Recruitment Policy.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against, or harass, other members of staff, regardless of their status. Please refer to the Trust Dignity at Work Statement and managers guidance.

## Aims and values

The Trust aim is to provide in order to promote the highest possible standards.

Our Equality Policy is based on our core values as expressed in our Trust values within this policy.

We consider all learners and their parents/carers to be of equal value, irrespective of disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, pregnancy, religion/beliefs and sexual orientation (also age and marital status, in the case of parents/carers).



However, treating people equally does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. We respect and value differences and our policies and practices therefore reflect the diverse range of life-experiences, needs and viewpoints of all stakeholders.

We welcome our responsibility to promote a culture of respect for others within a caring, cohesive environment. All members of the school community are encouraged to develop positive relationships reflecting their status as members of a diverse global community.

It is our duty to ensure that the aims and values outlined above apply to the full range of our policies and practices.

## Responsibilities

### **Our Trust Board**

Our Trust Board are responsible for ensuring that our academies comply with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented.

They keep aspects of their school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment.

### **Our CEO/Headteachers & Leadership Teams**

Our CEO and Headteachers are responsible for implementing the policy at Trust and academy level; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

### **Our Managers/Employees**

All managers within our Trust must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, led and model by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our core Trust values in line with equal opportunities. Managers will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

All our members of staff are personally responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. In certain circumstances, the Trust/academy could be held to be vicariously liable for actions of academy staff. However, staff should be aware that they may also be personally liable if they are found to have discriminated against another person whilst on Trust/School premises or on Trust/School-related business.

## **Policy**

This policy applies to all aspects of the Trust's relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

We will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities. Please see the following policies for specific information on our approach to these issues: Leave of Absence, Recruitment & Selection, Flexible Working and Maternity policies.

### **Forms of discrimination**

Discrimination by, or against, an employee is generally prohibited, unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination is where there is 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. For example, a requirement to work full-time adversely affects women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will be discriminatory unless it is objectively justified.



Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Grievance Policy.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

Disability discrimination includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

#### **Staff training and promotion, and conditions of service**

Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit. Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

#### **Discipline and Termination of Employment**

We will ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

#### **Disability discrimination**

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition, so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you should speak to your line manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers or job applicants at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff.

#### **Fixed-term employees and agency workers**

We monitor our use of fixed-term employees, and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

#### **Part-time work**

We monitor the conditions of service of our part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training and promotion opportunities. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under our Flexible Working Policy.

#### **Breaches of this policy**

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against, you are encouraged to read the Trust Dignity at work Statement and raise the matter through our Grievance Policy.



Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.

### Development of the policy

This policy has been ratified by the Lime Trust Board. It is part of our commitment to promoting equality and being an inclusive employer. When developing the policy, we took account of the DfE guidance on the Equality Act 2010.

### What we are doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- We ensure that everyone working in, or coming into contact with, our Trust are treated fairly and not discriminated against on the basis of any of the protected characteristics
- We are aware of our Reasonable Adjustment duty and, where required, make reasonable adjustments for our staff, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged when carrying out their role
- Our CEO and Headteachers ensure that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy, so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities, complying fully with current equalities legislation
- We ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones
- We aim for our workforce to reflect the diverse society we serve and provide a working environment free from any form of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying or victimisation.

### Recruitment and selection

All recruitment will be carried out in accordance with the Trust's Recruitment and Selection Policy, which is aimed at ensuring that the most suitable candidate is appointed fairly to the job.

All advertisements will inform the candidate that the Trust values equality and diversity. The selection process includes anonymised candidates to ensure that the selection is done without unconscious bias and on the true basis of an individual's merits and abilities.

Applicants will be asked to complete an equality and diversity monitoring form, which is separate from the application form and will be used for monitoring purposes only and does not form any part of the selection process.

### What we are doing to advance equality of opportunity for different groups

- We know the needs of our workforce and collect and analyse data in order to help with our succession planning
- We collect data and monitor progress and outcomes of different groups of our workforce to improve recruitment processes.

### Positive action

We will take positive and proportionate action to address the disadvantage faced by particular groups of staff with protected characteristics. The actions will be designed to meet the Trust's Equality Objectives.

### Equal opportunities for staff

This section deals with aspects of equal opportunities relating to staff. We are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles, and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment:

- All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability, and in compliance with the law
- We are also concerned to ensure, as far as possible, that the staffing of the Trust reflects the diversity of our community



- As an employer, we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce
- We respect the religious beliefs and practices of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice
- We ensure that all members of staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups, or teams.

#### Disseminating the policy

This Equality Policy is available:

- On our Trust and school websites
- On the Trust/school staff computer network/internal portal
- As paper copies in our Trust/school offices
- As part of induction for new staff

We also ensure that the whole Trust workforce knows about the policy, objectives and data through staff meetings and other communications.



## Appendix 1:

### Protected characteristics

The protected characteristics that relate to schools are:

- Disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

#### Disability

A person is a disabled person (someone who has the protected characteristic of disability) if they have a physical and/or mental impairment which has what the law calls 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

There is no need for a person to have a medically diagnosed cause for their impairment; what matters is the effect of the impairment not the cause.

In relation to physical impairment:

- Conditions that affect the body such as arthritis, hearing or sight impairment (unless this is correctable by glasses or contact lenses), diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, conditions such as HIV infection, cancer and multiple sclerosis, as well as loss of limbs or the use of limbs are covered
- HIV infection, cancer and multiple sclerosis are covered from the point of diagnosis.
- Severe disfigurement (such as scarring) is covered even if it has no physical impact on the person with the disfigurement, provided the long-term requirement is met.
- People who are registered as blind or partially sighted, or who are certified as being blind or partially sighted by a consultant ophthalmologist, are automatically treated as disabled under the Act.
- Mental impairment includes conditions such as dyslexia and autism as well as learning disabilities such as Down's syndrome and mental health conditions such as depression and schizophrenia.

#### Sex

A person's sex refers to the fact that they are male or female. In relation to a group of people, it refers to either men or women or to either boys or girls.

#### Race

Race means a person's:

- colour, and/or
- nationality (including citizenship), and/or
- ethnic or national origin

and a racial group is composed of people who have or share a colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

A person has the protected characteristic of race if they belong to a particular racial group, such as 'British people'. Racial groups can comprise two or more racial groups such as 'British Asians'.

#### Religion or belief

The protected characteristic of religion or belief includes any religion and any religious or philosophical belief. It also includes a lack of any such religion or belief.

A religion need not be mainstream or well known to gain protection as a religion. It must, though, be



identifiable and have a clear structure and belief system. Denominations or sects within religions may be considered a religion. Cults and new religious movements may also be considered religions or beliefs.

Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief.

‘Religious belief’ goes beyond beliefs about and adherence to a religion or its central articles of faith and may vary from person to person within the same religion.

A belief which is not a religious belief may be a philosophical belief, such as humanism or atheism.

A belief need not include faith or worship of a god or gods, but must affect how a person lives their life or perceives the world.

### **Sexual orientation**

Sexual orientation means the attraction a person feels towards one sex or another (or both), which determines who they form intimate relationships with or are attracted to.

- Some people are only attracted to those of the same sex (lesbian women and gay men).
- Some people are attracted to people of both sexes (bisexual people).
- Some people are only attracted to the opposite sex (heterosexual people).

Everyone is protected from being treated worse because of sexual orientation, whether they are bisexual, gay, lesbian or heterosexual.

Sexual orientation discrimination also covers discrimination connected with manifestations of that sexual orientation.

### **Gender reassignment**

Gender reassignment is a personal process (rather than a medical process) which involves a person expressing their gender in a way that differs from or is inconsistent with the physical sex they were born with.

This personal process may include undergoing medical procedures or, as is more likely for school pupils, it may simply include choosing to dress in a different way as part of the personal process of change.

A person will be protected because of gender reassignment where they:

- make their intention known to someone – it does not matter who this is, whether it is someone at school or at home or someone like a doctor:
  - once they have proposed to undergo gender reassignment they are protected, even if they take no further steps or they decide to stop later on
  - they do not have to have reached an irrevocable decision that they will undergo gender reassignment, but as soon as there is a manifestation of this intention they are protected
- start or continue to dress, behave or live (full-time or part-time) according to the gender they identify with as a person
- undergo treatment related to gender reassignment, such as surgery or hormone therapy  
or  
have received gender recognition under the Gender Recognition Act 2004

It does not matter which of these applies to a person for them to be protected because of the characteristic of gender reassignment.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

The Act lists pregnancy and maternity as a protected characteristic.

🏠 70-72 New Road  
Chingford  
London  
E4 8ET

☎ 020 8529 4979

✉ info@limetrust.org

🌐 limetrust.org