



Meridian Trust's Equality Statement

Context and requirements

This document describes how Meridian Trust fulfils its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty with regards to its pupils and staff. The equality objectives included within the statement are trust wide. They provide a framework within which each academy develops its own objectives depending on need and context.

In accordance with the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty, Meridian Trust has the general duty have due regard to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act on the basis of protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it. In education settings, this is defined further as having due regard to the need to:
 - a. Remove or minimise disadvantages
 - b. Take steps to meet different needs
 - c. Encourage participation when it is disproportionately low.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The following specific duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty are intended to help schools to meet their general duty:

1. publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the general equality duty ('equality information').

2. Prepare and publish of one or more equality objectives which should be done to help achieve to do any of the things mentioned in the general equality duty ('equality objectives')

Meridian Trust is also required to publish information about gender pay gap, if any, of its employees. This is done annually and can be found on <https://www.meridiantrust.co.uk/key-information/governance-key-information/miscellaneous/>

Equality Information

Eliminating discrimination and promoting equality are central to Meridian Trust's vision to promote high quality educational provision for all at the heart of local communities and are closely linked to our values of:

- Valuing people
- High quality learning environment
- Pursuit of excellence
- Extending the boundaries of learning, and
- Achievement for all.

Therefore, consideration is given at all levels of the organisation on how decisions will impact various groups of people, including those with protected characteristics. This is including but not limited to strategic decision making processes. Equality data at the school level by each school and it feeds into school developments plans and any specific improvement plans. Relevant anonymised equality data is shared with our Academy Councils, which provide local governance, as the performance of various groups including vulnerable groups is considered. Each school sets its equality objectives on the basis of need as evidenced by the data and the context.

At the level of the trust, information with regard to students is scrutinised by the Curriculum & Standards Committee which report to the trust board. The Committee considers trends across the trust, particularly with regard to children and young people with relevant protected characteristics and also any vulnerable groups. Staff data is shared with the Finance & Resources Committee in particular regarding gender. The Executive Board also considers trust wide data regularly. We are working towards ensuring more effective participation of people from groups with protected characteristics in decision making processes, in particular those which specifically affect them.

Meridian Trust, including all its schools, fosters good relations between people who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not share them. This is done through our curriculum and approach to work at the heart of local communities. Those school communities which are less diverse than others benefit from close links with other, more diverse, trust schools. This includes inter-school activities for children and young people as well as diverse role models in schools with less diverse catchments and workforce. The trust advertises in different ways and places to attract a diverse workforce and volunteers into governance roles.

Equality Objectives

Objectives and accessibility plans for each school are set by each school within the overall trust framework and can be found on school websites, together with equality information for the relevant academy. The overarching equality objectives for the whole trust link closely with Meridian Trust's priorities, specifically:

1. Promoting a positive, diverse and equitable culture in which our students and staff are fulfilled, engaged and motivated to perform their best.
2. Mitigating challenges of the cost of living crisis through:
 - Protecting quality of delivery to young people
 - Staff recruitment and retention
 - Value for money – robust financial management to most effectively use resources
 - custodians of community assets
 - supporting the wider profession through continued development of Teaching School Hub, ITT

3. Collaborative working to enhance model for excellence for schools and to significantly address SEND/ High Needs Block issues in the local areas we serve.

Meridian Trust's overarching equality objectives are:

1. Demonstrate a commitment to honest and detailed evaluation of where discrimination has a pernicious influence in governance and leadership conversations.
2. Ensuring that each academy uses equality information to evaluate the equality of opportunity within their setting focused on student outcomes and participation. This should then inform decisions to further refine Trust's own objectives and provide support to academies as needed particularly where children's and young people's with protected characteristics outcomes are disproportionately low.
3. Continue to develop the trust's commitment to equitable curriculum through the development of new resources and curriculum foci driven by curriculum development teams; this work includes ensuring a diverse range of materials and role models are used by the schools.
4. Collect and analyse information on protected characteristics among staff and those in governance roles to work towards ensuring that diversity among decision makers and role models at a minimum reflects the diversity of the schools/communities they serve;
5. Improve participation of people with protected characteristics in decision making processes through learning from promising practice within and beyond Meridian Trust. This could be through setting up a Working Group on Equality;
6. Further develop training on equality, including in recruitment, which will form part of our Meridian Learning CPD programme.

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