

Policy: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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1. Intent and Purpose

Franklin College Trust is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our students and staff, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. We are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment free from any form of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation. The vision of the Trust is to improve the life chances of our local community. We aim to be representative of all sections of our community and for each student and employee to feel respected and able to give their best. It is our intention to create a positive and inclusive environment where all students and staff can thrive, feel valued and respected. The Trust's Values are: Aspirational, Supportive, Persistent, Inclusive, Respectful and Even/Consistent.

2. Scope

This policy applies to students, staff, potential employees, temporary staff, contractors, external stakeholders, and outlines the Trust's expectations in terms of acceptable behaviour.

3. Legal Framework

The legislation provides protection from discrimination at the same level across all protected characteristics and fundamentally protects the rights of people to be treated fairly, with dignity and with respect. As a public sector organisation, we have a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Education Duty 2011.

We will work to fulfil our vision by not unlawfully discriminating because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

In addition, the Trust considers socio-economic background as a potential barrier to equality.

We are opposed to and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 and as defined by the Equality Act 2010, whether direct, perceived, indirect or by association.

This includes in:

- Pay and benefits
- Terms and conditions of employment

- Dealing with grievances and discipline
- Dismissal
- Redundancy
- Leave for parents
- Requests for flexible working
- Selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

3.1 Our Commitments

Franklin College Trust commits to:

- Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the Trust
- Creating an environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all students and staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training staff about their rights and responsibilities under the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

Franklin College Trust commits to:

- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow students, employees, customers, suppliers, visitors and the local community.
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Trust.
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the composition of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

3.2 Our Expectations

3.2.1 Students will be expected to:

- Not engage in or accept any bullying or harassment
- Respect, recognise and acknowledge varying needs of all members of the Trust community
- Be prepared to challenge and report inappropriate behaviour
- treat all staff, fellow students and visitors with courtesy and respect at all times, and without discrimination
- Uphold our core ASPIRE values and actively promote the fundamental British Values of mutual respect for, and tolerance of, difference.

3.2.2 Students can expect from the Trust:

- Inclusive learning practices, which acknowledge differences in students' learning styles and abilities
- Learning materials free from bias, which celebrate diversity and challenge stereotyping
- All instances of bullying, harassment or discrimination to be taken seriously and fully investigated, with appropriate action taken
- To be treated with respect and courtesy at all times
- A learning environment where differences are not only respected but are celebrated
- Reasonable adjustments and support in helping you meet learning aims.

3.2.3 Staff will be expected to:

- Uphold our core ASPIRE values at all times
- Challenge and report all instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination in the Trust community
- Lead by example in demonstrating understanding of, and respect for, differences in diversity groups
- Be courteous, respectful and treat without discrimination all members of the Trust community
- Contribute to the development of a learning environment free from discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

3.2.4 Teaching Staff in addition be expected to:

- Promote and champion equality and diversity in the classroom
- Challenge bias and stereotypes through teaching and learning
- Ensure teaching and learning engages all students
- Ensure that teaching and learning meets the differing needs of individual students.

3.2.5 Staff can expect from the Trust:

- All employees to have equal chances of staff development, career development and promotion opportunities
- Appropriate induction training and subsequent staff development on equality and diversity issues where appropriate
- Inappropriate behaviour from any member of the Trust community to be challenged, with appropriate disciplinary action taken
- To be treated fairly at all times, in an environment which respects individual differences and challenges discrimination
- All staff members to take responsibility for promoting a fair, inclusive and supportive environment, where discriminatory practices are challenged.

3.2.6 Leaders will be expected to:

- Uphold our core ASPIRE values at all times
- Ensure that an environment is created which supports equality, diversity and inclusion
- Promote equality and diversity throughout the Trust and lead by example
- Not engage in or accept any bullying or harassment

- Deliver equality of opportunity to all staff including access to information, resources, training, support and the fair application of policies and procedures
- Ensure the strategic plan includes a commitment to equality and diversity
- Review the Equality and Diversity Policy and Equality Objectives at least every three years.

3.2.7 Governors will be expected to:

- Uphold our core ASPIRE values at all times
- Challenge the Trust to deliver on its equality objectives and commitments
- Ensure the strategic plan includes equality, diversity and inclusion
- Maintain an awareness of their statutory responsibilities in relation to Equality legislation
- Identify a lead Community Governor or Director for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to take responsibility for EDI related matters.

3.2.8 Contractors will be expected to:

- Agree to abide by the Equality Act 2010.

3.3 Agreement to follow this policy

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is fully supported by senior management and has been agreed with trade unions and/or employee representatives and the Board of Directors.

The legislation allows the Trust to take positive action if leaders believe that a student or member of staff who share a protected characteristic suffer disadvantage, or their participation is low.

3.4 Our disciplinary and grievance procedures

Franklin College Trust will take any complaint seriously and complaints relating to discrimination within employment should be reported. Details of the Trust grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found on the Trust website.

4. Single Equality Scheme Statement

4.1 Introduction, overview and definitions

Franklin College Trust is committed to the principles of equality and diversity for all members of the Trust community. This commitment underpins and impacts on every area of activity and influences how we all live and work together. The Trust will abide by current legislation and guidance.

This policy applies to actions or behaviours whilst attending functions associated with the Trust. Visitors to the Trust are also expected to comply with this policy.

We are opposed to any form of discrimination. We are committed to striving with all staff, students and partners to create an open and inclusive environment where everyone is treated fairly. Diversity is celebrated.

This means the Trust is a place where ALL staff and students, whatever their circumstances:

- Have been recruited with integrity
- Feel welcomed and respected
- Are treated in a supportive and friendly way
- Wherever possible, have full access to all our services.

Creating an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for all is key to our Equality and Diversity Strategy. Every member of our Trust is responsible for preventing discrimination against others.

As a Trust we will:

- Work actively towards promoting equality of opportunity for all of our students and staff in respect of:
 - Access to and participation in education and training
 - Selection, recruitment, promotion and staff training and personal development
 - The curriculum and resources used
 - The Trust environment
 - Provision of support.
- Promote and abide by our Trust values to foster a climate within the Trust community
- Address equal opportunities issues at the individual and institutional level with equal vigour
- Review and modify procedures and priorities as necessary to improve the implementation of this policy and EDI Action Plan.

Equality

This is the means by which disadvantage and discrimination is reduced and eliminated by positive action. Equality ensures that no one receives less favourable treatment because of race, gender, gender identity, faith, marital status, disability, age, class, trade union membership or sexual orientation.

Diversity

This is the recognition that everyone is an individual. What we do responds to this diversity by adopting an approach that allows for individual differences and promotes opportunities for all. In celebrating diversity, we recognise and reflect the positive contributions of men and women of different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds; we welcome people of all abilities, ages, cultural backgrounds and sexual orientation.

Discrimination

This is where a person is treated differently by others because of their sex, sexuality, race, gender identity, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, disability, religion or trade union membership.

Racism

This is when people have views and expectations about different nationalities, religious or ethnic groups and behave in ways that can lead to violence, abuse or lack of respect.

Bullying, harassment and intimidation

The Trust does not tolerate any of these behaviours which make another person or group of people feel unhappy, uncomfortable or vulnerable (i.e. not safe). The list below illustrates activities that we do not tolerate but the list is not exclusive or exhaustive:

- **Physical assault** – For example inappropriate or unwelcome physical contact, throwing things at others, damaging another’s clothes or possession
- **Verbal assault** – Insults, swearing, disrespectful language
- **Threats** – Verbal or in writing, including using email or text messages or any form of online media
- **Images that offend** – Offensive pictures displayed publicly or left to intimidate another, images or words that cause offence to others
- **Racism, sexism or homophobia** – Any attitudes, procedures and patterns whose effect, though not necessarily whose conscious intention, is to create, maintain and extend power, influence and privilege to one group of people over another, or to consciously offend. This includes racist or sexist jokes; offensive gestures; graffiti; or symbols worn or displayed that cause offence to others.

The Trust expects all staff and students should respect the sensitivities of all in the Trust community and seek not to cause intentional or unintentional offence through their actions. If you have a concern regarding equality of opportunity:

1. Discuss this with your Teacher, Tutor or Manager
2. If they cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, record it in writing and submit it through the Complaints Procedure.

4.2 Race equality

Our commitment

The Trust celebrates and values the diversity brought to its students and to its workforce by individuals, and believes that the Trust will benefit from the participation of students and staff from a variety of racial, ethnic and national backgrounds, thus allowing it to play its part in promoting the value of a multicultural society. The Trust will treat all employees and students with respect and dignity, and seek to provide a positive working and learning environment free from racial discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

The Trust will seek not only to eliminate discrimination, but also to create a working and learning environment based on positive relations between members of different racial groups. To this end, the Trust undertakes to provide training and support for staff, to consult with staff about their experience of the working environment, and to provide diverse images in any material which it produces for students and staff. The aim is to create a positive, inclusive ethos where issues of racism, stereotyping and discrimination can be discussed openly with a shared commitment to challenging and preventing racism and discrimination, to respecting diversity and difference, and to encouraging good relations between people of different groups.

The Trust will work towards the elimination of racism, whether overt or covert, and will seek to ensure that individuals and communities have equal access to learning programmes and facilities.

Meeting our duties

We will seek to ensure that:

- Community Governors, Directors, Members, staff, students and their sponsors (including work placement providers) are aware of our race equality duty and the action needed for its implementation
- Staff, students and their sponsors are aware of the value placed upon equal opportunity and that action will be taken in the event of any breach of the duty
- Community Governors, Directors, Members and staff have access to information sources, which assists them to plan, implement and monitor actions to carry out their responsibilities under the duty.

We will also ensure the Trust's publicity materials present appropriate and positive messages about minority racial groups.

The Trust undertakes, once the results of monitoring are available, to consider targets to reduce any disadvantage suffered by ethnic minority employees and students. If monitoring reveals that specific racial minority groups are disadvantaged, some targets may relate to those specific groups.

Complaints

The Trust will seek to provide a supportive environment for those who make claims of discrimination or harassment.

Acts of racial discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation or abuse will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

Students who feel they are being discriminated against on racial grounds should raise the matter under the Trust Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy, which will, if the accusation is upheld, be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

Staff who feel they are being discriminated against on racial grounds by other members of staff should raise the matter under the Grievance Procedure, which will, if the accusation is upheld, be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

If, in the course of their work, Trust staff suffer racial discrimination from members of the public, the Trust will take appropriate action and provide appropriate support.

Any racist behaviour directed against staff by students will be dealt with under the Learning Behaviour and Attendance Policy.

4.3 Disability equality

Our commitment

The Trust seeks to create an environment that is open and accessible, thus enabling all of its members to participate fully in Trust life. In particular, the Trust seeks to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and disability-related harassment
- Take all reasonable steps to meet disabled people's needs

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

Disability covers a wide range of mental and physical impairments including those affecting mobility, hearing and sight, learning difficulties including dyslexia, and medical conditions including mental health problems.

Discrimination may occur in the following ways:

- By treating a disabled person less favourably, for a reason related to the person's disability
- By failing to make a reasonable adjustment, resulting in a disabled person being placed at a substantial disadvantage
- By treating employees in a detrimental way because of something that is a consequence of their disability.

Meeting our duty

The Trust will not discriminate against any person because of a disability unless this can be justified: in exceptional circumstances, the Trust may genuinely and reasonably believe that less favourable treatment is necessary, for example, where the health and safety of the disabled person or someone else would be placed at risk or excessive and unreasonable adjustments would be needed to accommodate the disability.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Trust will seek to make reasonable adjustments, wherever possible, to accommodate individual needs; furthermore, it will seek to anticipate the requirements of disabled people so that it is in a position to comply with its duty as and when required.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Providing publicity materials and information in alternative formats
- Allowing absences for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment
- Making special arrangements for parking and access to buildings
- Modifying a student's course and/or Trust expectations of a student in the light of diagnosed mental health difficulty
- Modifying equipment.

Disclosure

All existing and prospective members of the Trust community are encouraged to disclose their disabilities so that appropriate support can be made available to them. All information relating to such a disclosure will be treated sensitively, in accordance with normal Trust procedures and with the Data Protection Act.

Once a disability is disclosed then the Trust is deemed to know and has a duty to make any reasonable adjustments that are necessary; staff are therefore expected to familiarise themselves with the Trust's procedures relating to disclosure and passing on information.

Recruitment (staff) and admissions (students)

The Trust welcomes applications from all people, disabled or otherwise, who are suitably qualified for the course or job advertised.

Applicants who are aware they have specific needs at the time of application to the Trust are encouraged to outline them in confidence so that appropriate arrangements can be made before and during the interview.

Where adjustments to the Trust environment are required, the Trust will make every effort to respond, provided this may be achieved within reasonable resource constraints; for example, the Trust will assist students and staff with the acquisition, use and storage of special equipment.

Where a disability has been declared, interviews with potential students and staff will include an assessment of the applicant's expectations and needs; together with an assessment of whether the Trust's facilities and resources are sufficient to meet those needs.

Applications will be assessed on the basis of suitability for the job or course in question. The assessment will be independent of, and will not be influenced by, any considerations relating to the support requirements of the applicant.

Teaching and Learning

Departments will employ teaching and learning strategies which make the course(s) as inclusive as is reasonably possible; and, where appropriate and reasonable, make adjustments to accommodate disabled students' individual needs.

Course specifications will not include unnecessary barriers to access by disabled students.

Assessment and examination policies, practices and procedures will be adjusted, where possible, to provide disabled students with the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes; this may involve alternative assessment and examination arrangements.

Where appropriate, specialist training will be provided for teachers of disabled students to ensure they have the knowledge and expertise to provide adequate support.

Physical accommodation

The Trust is committed to making its site accessible; where necessary, adaptations to accommodation will be made subject to reasonable resource constraints. Where appropriate, the Trust will carry out a risk assessment to ensure that accessibility for particular disabilities complies with the Trust's Health and Safety Policy.

4.4 Gender, gender reassignment and sexual orientation equality

Our Commitment

The Trust welcomes students and staff regardless of gender or sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual or other), re-assignment (undergone surgery) or preference (individual's choice to live as a specific gender).

Everyone is valued as an individual, and the Trust encourages the contributions made by all. The Trust seeks to promote positive images, role models and perceptions of different genders and different sexual orientations.

Meeting our duty

The Trust will fulfil its general duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act, and discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act
- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

In order to deliver the general duty, the Trust will fulfil the following specific duties:

- Consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap
- Consult stakeholders and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender and sexual orientation equality objectives
- Assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender and sexual orientation equality
- Implement the actions set out in the Equality Action Plan.

The Trust will not discriminate on grounds of gender or marital status. It is also unlawful to discriminate against individuals who:

- Intend to undergo gender reassignment
- Are currently undergoing gender reassignment
- Have already undergone gender reassignment.

The law covers recruitment, terms and conditions, pay and benefits, status, training, promotion and transfer opportunities, right through to redundancy and dismissal. However, in some cases, a job can be offered to someone of a particular sex, because of what is called a 'genuine occupational qualification' (for example, some jobs in single-sex schools).

The Trust will not discriminate between men and women in terms of their pay and conditions where they are doing the same or similar work; work rated as equivalent in a job evaluation study by the employer; or work of equal value.

The Trust will not discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is defined as an orientation to the same sex, the opposite sex, or the same and opposite sex. The law also covers discrimination against someone because of a perception about their sexual orientation, even if that perception is not correct.

The Trust recognises that same-sex couples have the same rights as married heterosexual couples. Legislation recognises both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. A person who is a civil partner in a registered civil partnership of a same-sex couple will not be treated less favourably than a married person in similar circumstances.

The Trust recognises that in very limited circumstances it is lawful for an employer to treat people differently if it is a genuine occupational requirement that the job holder must be of a particular sexual orientation.

4.5 Age equality

Our commitment

The Trust does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of age, other than as legitimately defined within its admissions policies.

Meeting our duty

In the employment of staff, selection criteria include job-related qualifications, experience and skills but make no reference to age; there is no question about age on the application form.

The Trust does not enforce a retirement age of 65. Staff are entitled to request to work beyond their normal retirement date and this request will be considered on an individual basis.

4.6 Religion and belief equality

Our commitment

The Trust seeks to recognise the needs of students and staff of diverse religious groups, and to respond sensitively and appropriately to their needs. It will not discriminate on the grounds of a person's perceived or actual religion/belief or of the religion/belief of someone with whom the person associates.

Meeting our duty

The Trust is committed to meeting our legal and moral duties to ensure equality of opportunity and fair treatment for individuals of all religions, beliefs, and none. This includes complying with the Equality Act 2010 and promoting a culture of respect, understanding, and inclusion across all aspects of our organisation. We will actively identify and remove barriers that may disadvantage individuals because of their religion or belief, provide reasonable accommodations for religious observance, and ensure that our policies, practices, and decision-making processes are free from discrimination or bias. We aim to foster an environment where everyone feels valued and able to express their beliefs without fear of prejudice or exclusion.

4.7 Social and economic equality

Our commitment

We are committed to promoting social and economic equality by ensuring that every learner and staff member has fair access to opportunities, resources, and support, regardless of their background or circumstances. We recognise that economic and social inequalities can create barriers to education, employment, and participation, and we are dedicated to addressing these through inclusive policies, targeted support, and equitable practices. The Trust will actively work to reduce disadvantage, support social mobility, and create an environment where everyone can achieve their potential. By fostering a culture of respect, fairness, and inclusion, we aim to empower individuals to contribute fully to Trust life and to the wider community.

Meeting our duty

The Trust will seek to reduce social and economic inequalities. The Trust will take steps to identify and remove barriers that may disadvantage learners or staff from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We will use data and evidence to monitor participation, retention, and achievement, ensuring that support and interventions are targeted where they are most needed. The Trust will provide accessible financial

assistance, guidance, and wellbeing services to help mitigate the impact of economic hardship and promote equal access to learning and progression opportunities. Staff will receive training to recognise and respond to the effects of social and economic inequality, and the Trust will work in partnership with local communities, employers, and agencies to support social mobility and inclusion.

5. Policy References

5.1 Access to the Policy

This policy, along with other related policies, will be available on the Trust's website.

5.2 Quality and Assurance Monitoring

The content and operation of this policy will be formally reviewed annually reviewed annually and also to reflect any update of Equality Legislation.