

Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedure

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WeST Vision, Mission and Values

[Westcountry Schools Trust - Our Vision, Mission and Values](#)

Providing Accessible Formats

This policy has been written in a dyslexia accessible format, which can also support the needs of other neurodiverse groups. If you are unable to use this document and require it in a different format, please contact Human Resources who can provide alternative accessible formats by request.

WeST Policy Suite

All Trust HR Policies are accessible via the WeST Staff Portal. Please contact your local administrative office or Human Resources for log-in details.

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Policy quick read

Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) outlines its commitment to equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all employees, learners, and stakeholders, aiming to create an inclusive culture and comply with the Equality Act 2010. The policy emphasises non-discrimination, accessibility, and respectful treatment, supported by clear delegation of authority and procedures for recruitment, employment, and learner support.

- **Commitment to Equality and Inclusion:** WeST commits to eliminating discrimination and fostering good relations among all community members, ensuring equal access to education and employment opportunities.
- **Delegation of Authority:** The policy defines levels of authority for staffing decisions to ensure fair and consistent application of equality principles across the Trust.
- **Accessible Formats and Communication:** The policy is provided in dyslexia-accessible format and alternative formats are available upon request
- **Recruitment and Selection Practices:** Recruitment follows procedures to prevent discrimination, including anonymised shortlisting, avoidance of biased language, and guaranteed interviews for disabled candidates meeting job criteria.
- **Training, Development, and Employment Conditions:** Employee development is supported through personal development reviews and equal access to training, with pay and promotion decisions following fair policies.
- **Disability Support and Adjustments:** WeST encourages disclosure of disabilities to provide reasonable adjustments, promotes neurodiversity inclusivity, and supports access to external aids and services. Employees can access HR guidance, occupational health, and counselling
- **Handling Employment Termination:** Redundancy and disciplinary procedures are applied fairly and without discrimination.
- **Support and Raising Concerns:** Concerns about policy breaches can be raised confidentially through grievance or whistleblowing procedures.
- **Learner Inclusion and Support:** WeST ensures non-discrimination in admissions and education, provides tailored support for learners with additional needs, maintains consistent behaviour policies, and uses exclusion only as a last resort

Contents

1. Delegation of Authority	4
2. Introduction	6
3. Purpose and Scope	7
4. Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion commitments	7
5. Confidentiality	8
APPENDIX 1 - Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion specific considerations for the WeST workforce (employees, workers, volunteers, Trustees and Hub Advisory Board members)	10
○ Selection and Recruitment	10
○ training, development and conditions of service	12
○ Terminating employment	12
○ Disability discrimination	13
○ Other measures	14
○ Support for employees	14
○ Raising concerns under this policy	14
○ Equality Monitoring	15
APPENDIX 2 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion specific considerations for WeST learners (pupils/students)	16
Policy History	18

1. Delegation of Authority

The Trust is committed to ensuring a consistent, fair, and equitable approach in all staffing matters, and will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of an employee’s gender, age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity status, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In order to achieve this aim, there needs to be a clear delegation of authority throughout the structure of the Trust and for this purpose the term “Responsible Officer” shall apply as per the levels below:

Delegation Key	
Line Manager	Person with formal line management responsibility as defined within the job description.
Level One	<p>If the employee is based within a school, the person with authority to act will be a Trust Headteacher, or an appropriate senior member of staff from the Trust Executive Leadership Team</p> <p>If the employee is based within the Core Services Team, the person with authority to act will be a member of the Executive Leadership Team</p> <p>If the employee is a Headteacher and dismissal is a potential outcome the person with authority to act will be the CEO, otherwise, the person with authority to act will be a Director of Education or the Deputy CEO</p> <p>If the employee is a member of Executive Leadership Team, the person with authority to act will be the CEO, unless they have acted as the Line Manager, in which case the person with authority to act will be the Chair of the Trust</p> <p>If the Employee is the Chief Executive Officer, the person with authority to act will be the Chair of the Trust</p>
Level Two	<p>Where Level One was the Headteacher the person with authority to act will be the Director of Education or Deputy CEO</p> <p>Where Level One was a member of the Executive Leadership Team the person with authority to act will be the CEO</p> <p>Where Level One was the CEO or the Chair of the Trust, the matter will be referred to a Trustee Appeal Panel</p>

The Trust reserves the right in exceptional circumstances to vary the composition of the delegated authority / panel in order to ensure that meetings proceed without undue delay. In these circumstances the Trust will ensure that the responsible officer maintains appropriate standards of separation and confidentiality.

2. Introduction

Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) is committed to providing a broad and balanced curriculum supported by high quality teaching and learning for our pupils. We recognise that by valuing and promoting equality, equity, diversity and inclusion for all employees and job applicants, and by avoiding unlawful discrimination in employment and delivery of services, we will be able to deliver first class education.

This policy sets out how WeST intends to fulfil its responsibilities with regards to its workforce and learners and describes the way in which WeST will not only meet the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equalities Duty, but also how we strive to go beyond this, to proactively create an inclusive culture where equal access and opportunities are available to all. Appendices 1 and 2 outline further specifics focused on actions to support the WeST workforce, its learners and other stakeholders.

All WeST schools have an aspirational, supportive and inclusive culture where success is built around positive relationships. We believe that by working collectively, sharing what works well and jointly developing best practice we are stronger together and can provide the very best education for our children.

Everyone in WeST will adopt inclusive language and practice, acting with kindness and compassion to promote the wellbeing of all. WeST recognises that as a family of schools we share common values and beliefs, however all our schools are unique and hold their own identity. Therefore, it is anticipated local school units may have a personalised statement regarding equality, diversity and inclusion, particularly in respect of learners, in addition to this trust wide policy; this may also form part of local school improvement/development plans. Employees, learners, volunteers, Trustees and Hub Advisory Board members are made aware of the existence of this policy and where it can be accessed.

The current version of this policy will be available from the WeST Staff Portal and school websites should hold copies of any local supporting documentation. Human Resources can be contacted where alternative formats are required.

For new employees joining the trust, the induction programme should include a signpost to this policy with confirmation that it has been read and understood along with the date.

3. Purpose and Scope

The principles of non-discrimination apply to how we expect our employees and workers to treat all those involved with WeST e.g. colleagues, pupils, parents and carers, Trustees, Hub Advisory Board members, visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former employees, regardless of whether a protected characteristic and the associated the legal protection applies.

All stakeholders of WeST will also adhere to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by not discriminating against any other stakeholders on the grounds of a characteristic specified in the Act e.g. learners, staff, volunteers or anyone involved in external agencies with whom the organisation may be working. These protected characteristics are:

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

It is expected that every person involved with WeST as an organisation will make a positive contribution to this policy.

4. Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Commitments

WeST is committed to ensuring consideration is given to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion in all activities, with particular regard to the shaping of policies and procedures, development and delivery of services and employer decisions.

This policy complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and, under the general public sector equality duty, WeST will have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and

- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition:

- WeST is committed to a policy of equality and aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant, learner, or other member of the trust community is treated less favourably on the grounds of a protected characteristic.
- Any behaviour, comments, or attitudes that threaten or deliberately undermine this commitment will not be tolerated. We aim to provide equal access to high quality educational/employment opportunities and to ensure that everyone feels that they are a valued member of the trust/school community. We seek to provide a respectful, safe and happy environment where all can flourish and where cultural diversity is celebrated.
- We aim to empower our learners to make informed choices so that they are better prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life within their community.
- Equality of opportunity cannot be realised without the involvement and commitment of all members of the trust/school community and a common understanding of the pivotal role of equal opportunities in the context of the trust's ethos and values. The recognition that the role of all staff is crucial in the delivery of the objectives of the policy is of particular importance.
- WeST is committed to ensuring that the services it provides are accessible to all and aims to positively encourage and benefit people from disadvantaged groups.
- The provision of specialist aids and facilities to enable disabled people will be positively considered.
- The trust will monitor any issues that arise within the organisation and take appropriate action, fully supporting any person in the organisation who is faced with prejudice or discrimination.
- WeST will undertake a bi-annual review to ensure that the policy is clear, in keeping with current legislation and being adhered to.

5. Confidentiality

Any parties affected by or involved in the application of this policy will be expected to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. Breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously,

especially if they hinder the application of the policy. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in action being taken under the disciplinary policy arrangements.

Disclosure of information may also be a breach under the Data Protection Act (2018) and may lead to action being taken under the provisions of that Act, in addition to action being taken under the disciplinary policy.

Appendix 1 – EEDI specific considerations for the WeST workforce (employees, workers, volunteers, Trustees and Governance)

Applying our policy to recruitment and selection

The process to recruit new employees will be in accordance with the WeST Recruitment and Selection Policy which expressly specifies actions to ensure non-discriminatory and equality opportunity commitments.

The trust aims to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any protected characteristic. Recruitment procedures are set out in our Recruitment and Selection Policy and are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant skills and abilities. All applicants will be provided with a copy of our Recruitment Privacy Notice which sets out how we will gather, process and hold personal data of individuals during the recruitment process.

Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. For example, they will avoid any gender, age or culturally specific language or implication.

Job selection criteria as set out in the person specification will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job. Shortlisting of applicants should be done by more than one person and will be conducted objectively against the requirements of the job. Part 1 of the applications from the My New Term recruitment platform, will be provided in anonymised format to the panel and each member of the selection panel must score each applicant privately.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, other than where it is necessary to:

- establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- establish if any reasonable adjustments need to be made to enable an applicant to have a fair interview or assessment.
- carry out equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the

decision- making process).

Job offers will be conditional upon a satisfactory medical check in accordance with our obligation under Keeping Children Safe in Education where a school must verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities in accordance with the Education (Health Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

Applicants will not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants will not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment.

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance, name or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original specified documents before employment starts to satisfy current immigration legislation and the right to work in the UK.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be under-represented or disadvantaged in WeST, we may monitor diversity data as part of the recruitment process. Candidates will be asked to complete an Equality and Diversity Monitoring form in Part 3 of the application form on My New Term.

Provision of this information is voluntary, and it will not adversely affect an individual's success at recruitment, or any other decision related to their employment. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

This will be detached from the application form prior to shortlisting and the anonymous details recorded by the trust for monitoring purposes only. Information will be retained for a period of 6 months, before being securely disposed of. Applicants will not be eliminated from the shortlist on the grounds of the following, other than where a genuine occupational requirement applies:

- Age
- Disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership

- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- 'spent convictions' unrelated to the job

Applying our policy to training, development and conditions of service

All employees will be provided with a copy of our Data Protection Policy which sets out how we will collect, hold and share personal data of individuals during their employment.

Employees training and development needs will be identified through the Personal Development Review Process. All employees will be given appropriate access to relevant training and development for their job and to support their progress within the trust.

Pay and promotion decisions will be made in accordance with the trust Pay Policy and Recruitment and Selection Policy.

Relevant national and local conditions of service within WeST, as applied to our employees, will meet the requirements of equal opportunities.

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

Applying our policy when terminating employment

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

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

Disability Discrimination

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

WeST employees who are, or who become, disabled are encouraged to disclose and discuss their condition to enable the trust to provide appropriate support.

Those experiencing difficulties at work because of a disability, may wish to contact their line manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise those difficulties. The trust may wish to consult employees and relevant medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. Careful considerations will be made in an attempt to accommodate employee needs within reason. If a particular adjustment is not considered reasonable, the trust will explain why and attempt to find an alternative solution where possible.

WeST promotes an inclusive neurodiversity culture in the workplace. As such all reasonable adjustments will be considered for neurodiverse individuals throughout any processes, including but not limited to recruitment, personal development, disciplinary and capability procedures to give equal access and opportunities for all. Specialist advice may be sought from relevant external advisers following pre-employment health checks or as result an emerging need to consider reasonable adjustments.

The trust will work alongside employees helping them to apply for Access to Work support where this might be appropriate.

WeST will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether they place disabled employees or job applicants at a substantial disadvantage compared to other employees.

Where reasonable, steps will be taken to improve access for employees who have a disability.

As a Disability Confident employer WeST is committed to inclusivity and accessibility. Candidates who declare a disability on their application will be guaranteed an interview provided they meet the minimum criteria for the job. This applies to all internal and external vacancies.

Other Measures

WeST will record, monitor and report data concerning gender pay gap in accordance with the legislative requirements.

In accordance with the regulations the trust Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessment is published via the WeST website.

All principles of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion also work alongside the provision of the Code of Conduct for WeST and other relevant policy arrangements.

Support for employees

Procedural guidance relating to this policy is available from HR. Where a referral to Occupational Health or the counselling service is necessary, this should be made by the employee's line manager.

Raising Concerns

Any stakeholder who believes that this policy has not been applied as intended, or that they have been treated unfairly, should immediately bring the situation to the attention of the parties concerned. Where this is not possible or where serious potential breaches arise, the individual may wish to raise the matter in accordance with the relevant trust HR policy and process.

Where the individual identifying a potential breach of this policy is an employee, they should refer to the Grievance Policy to explore both informal and formal resolution, or, where relevant, the Whistleblowing Policy.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Employees who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure, with reference to the Code of Conduct and Acceptable Behaviour Policy.

Any member of staff who is found, after investigation, to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The trust will take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

Equality Monitoring

WeST has an aspiration to develop effective monitoring of workforce equality data and the Trust recognises the importance of collecting data on the workforce in order to fulfil its Public Sector Equalities Duty (PSED).

The Trust intends to do this by developing an over-arching policy specifying what data will be collected, monitored and used to inform further actions. This policy will clearly state that data on protected characteristics is confidential and should not be used for purposes other than equality monitoring to ensure that WeST fulfils its PSED. The Trust aim is to improve data collection practices and HR system capabilities to facilitate the collection of data on each of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. This would allow the exploration of equality data within the context of staff absence, turnover and the use of procedures, including capability and attendance management, in addition to data on pay and PDR.

Appendix 2 – EEDI specific considerations for WeST learners (pupils and students)

This appendix should be considered in conjunction with other relevant learner focused policies, including, but not limited to:

- Admissions
- Protection of Biometric Information
- Accessibility Plan
- Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School
- EYFS
- Intimate Care
- Special Educational Needs and Disability
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions
- Relationships and Sex Education (secondary)
- Relationships Education (primary)
- Behaviour in Schools
- Behaviour principles written statement
- School Exclusion
- First Aid in Schools
- Equality information and objectives
- Public Sector Equality Duty - statement for publication
- Careers guidance: details of your careers programme
- Provider access statement

WeST operates from the principle that people should not be discriminated against in schools' provision, on the basis of any of the protected characteristics set out in the Act, when seeking admission to schools, when accessing the education and benefits provided, or by being excluded from school. This does not necessarily mean that schools should treat everybody in the same way: in some circumstances, an education provider will need to deliver in a range of ways to meet the differing needs so that all learners receive the same standard of education, as far as this is possible. Therefore, WeST may decide to use the 'Positive Action' clause of the Equality Act 2010, which allows for the setting up of courses specifically for a certain group,

such as Afro- Caribbean boys or Roma children.

WeST schools have behaviour policies and support programs, consistently and fairly applied, that ensure all staff and pupils can benefit from a respectful, safe and calm learning environment.

Teachers and support staff are highly skilled at recognising pupils who may need additional support, and this is provided through effective early intervention. School leaders and pastoral staff have access to a skilled team of specialists who can provide bespoke solutions to meet the needs of WeST's most vulnerable learners.

Principals that guide WeST's inclusive practices:

- By focussing on a broad, balanced and knowledge-rich curriculum and improving the quality of teaching and ensuring behaviour policies are fairly and consistently applied school leaders can promote a safe, inclusive learning environment for all children.
- All teachers are teachers of special education needs; they should seek support from specialists (e.g. SENDCO) to develop their practice where necessary but recognise their own responsibility to support learners with additional needs in their classes.
- School leaders should collaborate proactively with their staff to create an environment which helps pupils to develop the executive functioning and self-regulation skills necessary to be successful at school.
- When things go wrong, all parties will be treated fairly and compassionately, with an emphasis on restoring relationships.
- Any consequences that are imposed in the light of poor behaviour will be fair, proportionate and only applied in accordance with the relevant policy once an investigation has ascertained, as far as reasonably possible, what has happened.
- Exclusion, whether fixed-term or permanent, will only be used as a last resort.

Raising concerns:

Any stakeholder who believes that this policy has not been applied as intended in relation to learners should immediately bring the situation to the attention of the parties concerned.

Where this is not possible or where serious potential breaches arise the individual may wish to raise a complaint in accordance with the trust policy and process.

Policy History

Policy / Version Date	Summary of change	Contact	Implementation Date	Review Date
July 2013	Policy Implemented	HR	July 2013	As necessary and appropriate
May 2017	Policy updated due to the change in trust name and the delegation of authority	HR WeST	TBC	Annual Review
September 2017	Reviewed to incorporate date of publication, additional PCE role	HR WeST	September 2017	Annual Review
February 2019	Policy review	HR WeST	February 2019	Annual Review
September 2022	Policy review (formally known as WeST Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy, February 2019)	HR WeST	January 2023	Bi-Annual Review due September 2024
June 2023	Reviewed for appropriate delegated authority, updated governance arrangements and gender neutral language	HR WeST	September 2023	September 2024
February 2025	MINOR AMENDMENT - To align with governance arrangements – full review deferred to September 2025	HR WeST	February 2025	September 2025
September 2025	Updated to include equity. Transferred to new dyslexia friendly format including quick read. Minor updates to align with Recruitment & Selection.	HR WeST	September 2025	Biannual Review date September 2027