

# SOKE EDUCATION TRUST

## Equality & Diversity Policy

Approved via Governorhub

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| Approved Date | 17 April 2024 |
| Review Date   | April 2027    |



## Equality and Diversity Policy

### Terms of Reference

1. For all employees, governors and volunteers employed or appointed by Soke Education Trust
2. Definitions:

Headteacher also refers to any other title used to identify the Headteacher, where appropriate, or other senior manager delegated to deal with the matter by the Headteacher.

Companion refers to a person chosen by the employee to accompany them, who shall be a trade union representative or a workplace colleague.

### Introduction

3. The Trust is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all employees and job applicants. We aim to create a supportive and inclusive working environment in which all individuals can make the best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.
4. The Trust will take allegations of discrimination seriously and address them promptly and confidentially, where possible.
5. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including senior managers, employees, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers, casual workers, agency staff and governors (collectively referred to as employees in this policy). All employees have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and always treat colleagues with dignity, as well as a duty not to discriminate against or harass other employees, regardless of their status. Details of this are in the Bullying and Harassment Policy.
6. All employees are personally responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives regarding equal opportunities. In certain circumstances, the Governing Body could be held to be vicariously liable for the actions of their employees. Employees should be aware that they may be personally liable if they are found to have discriminated against another person whilst in School or on School-related business.
7. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time following consultation. Elements of this procedure may be varied as appropriate in any case.

### Scope and Purpose of the Policy

8. This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with employees and to relations between employees 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.
9. We will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities. Please see the following for specific information on our approach to these issues.

## **Protected Characteristics**

10. Discrimination is being treated unfairly for one of the following reasons:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Being married or in a civil partnership
  - Pregnancy or maternity
  - Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation
  - Gender reassignment (inclusive of non-binary and gender-fluid individuals)
11. These are called protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. Discrimination based on any of these protected characteristics is against the law.

## **How can you be Discriminated Against?**

12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. Discrimination by perception is when a person is discriminated against because they are thought to have a particular protected characteristic when in fact they do not. If you discriminate against people because you think they are transsexual or gay, for example, then they will be protected even if they do not have these protected characteristics.
16. Discrimination by association means that a person is treated less favourably because they are linked or associated with a protected characteristic. The person does not have the protected characteristic, but they are treated less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic of a friend, spouse, partner, parent, or another person with whom they are associated
17. 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 Bullying and Harassment Policy.

18. 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.

### **Employee Training, Promotion and Conditions of Service**

19. All managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. Managers will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice. The Chief Operating Officer has overall responsibility for equal opportunities training.
20. Employee training needs will be identified through regular appraisals. All employees 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.
21. Our conditions of service, 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.

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

22. We will ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.
23. We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

### **Disability Discrimination**

24. If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.
25. 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.
26. We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers and job applicants at a substantial disadvantage compared to other employees. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled employees.

### **Fixed-term Employees, Casual and Agency Workers**

27. We monitor our use of fixed-term employees, casual 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**

28. We monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and 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**

29. If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our grievance procedure. If you believe that you may have been subject to harassment or bullying, you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Bullying and Harassment Policy.
30. 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.
31. Any employee who is found 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. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

### **Who is Responsible for this Policy?**

32. The Governing Body has ultimate responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy and the Senior Manager with responsibility for equalities issues has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law.
33. All employees are personally responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives about equal opportunities. In certain circumstances, the Governing Body could be held to be vicariously liable for the actions of their employees. Employees should be aware that they may be personally liable if they are found to have discriminated against another person whilst in School or on School-related business.
34. Employees are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting [hr@sokeeducationtrust.co.uk](mailto:hr@sokeeducationtrust.co.uk)