



Equality Policy and Objectives

Policy Review

This policy was reviewed and approved at the Management Committee meeting held on **26.02.2026**.

The next scheduled review and renewal date is **26.02.2030**

Policy Statement and Principles

- To treat all individuals with equal value.
- To eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- To foster positive attitudes and good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (i.e. tackle prejudice and promote understanding).
- To take such steps as are reasonable to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.

- To take such steps as are reasonable to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- To provide a range of education and training programmes which encourage everyone to participate in learning.
- To ensure that recruitment, retention and development of staff is done so following the equality principles.
- To consider equality implications before and at the time that policies are developed as well as keeping them under review on a continual basis.
- To carry out equality impact assessments to assess whether policies and / or plans are having a negative or adverse, or positive impact on specific groups of individuals.
- To ensure that all marketing activities and procurement processes meet equality and diversity best practice.
- To respect the religious beliefs and practices of all individuals.

In both its delivery of services and the employment of its staff, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will ensure that no person will be discriminated against due to any of the protected characteristics as detailed in the Act. This includes discrimination due to association or perception (where it is believed that an individual has a particular characteristic). The characteristics protected by the act are:

- age (as an employer – but not applicable to students)
- disability
- ethnicity
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

In addition to this no employees will be discriminated against due to trade union membership or activities.

The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of an STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- In relation to admissions.
- In the way it provides education for pupils.
- In the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service.
- By excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

Roles and Responsibilities

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will:

- Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities, given necessary training and support, and report progress to the Management Committee
- Ensure that the recording and reporting of equality and diversity is sufficiently scrutinised.
- Foster positive attitudes and relationships, a shared sense of cohesion and belonging, and ensure this is promoted in our policies, procedures and activities.
- Observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development, and ensure that all policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees regardless of any protected characteristic, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity.
- Reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist.
- Ensure staff promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL, challenging inappropriate language and behaviour, responding appropriately to incidents of discrimination and harassment, and showing appropriate support for pupils with additional needs, maintaining a good level of awareness of issues surrounding equality.

The Management Committee board will:

- Ensure that the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations.
- Effectively communicate and adopt this policy throughout the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL
- Meet its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to publish equality objectives at least every four years commencing on the date of the last publication.
- Ensure that the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL's policies and procedures are developed and implemented with appropriate equality impact assessments informing future plans.
- Ensure that the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL's Admissions Policy does not discriminate in any way.
- Ensure equal opportunities in its staff recruitment and promotion practices, professional development programmes and in membership of the Management Committee.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the equality policy annually.
- Monitor education outcomes, incidents of harassment and discrimination and referrals by a range of criteria including protected characteristics.

The Executive Headteacher will:

- Implement this policy and its procedures.
- Ensure that all staff members receive the appropriate equality and diversity training as part of their induction and CPD.
- Ensure that all parents, visitors and contractors are aware of, and comply with, the provisions of this policy.
- Actively challenge and take appropriate action in any case of discriminatory practice.
- Address any reported incidents of harassment or bullying in line with DfE guidance.

- Produce an annual report on the progress meeting the equality objectives set out in this policy.

Employees will:

- Be mindful of any incidents of harassment or bullying in the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL.
- Address any minor issues of harassment or bullying and report any major breaches of the policy to the Executive Headteacher
- Identify and challenge bias and stereotyping within the curriculum and the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL's culture.
- Promote equality and good relations, and not harass or discriminate in any way.
- Monitor pupils' progress and academic needs to ensure the appropriate support is in place.
- Keep up-to-date with equality legislation and its application by attending the appropriate training.

Equality Objectives

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL is committed to promoting the welfare and equality of all its staff, pupils and other members of the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL community. To achieve this, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL has established the following objectives:

- Monitor changes to the curriculum to ensure they result in good outcomes for pupils in all vulnerable groups, and to review the curriculum considering new performance measures
- Offer appropriate learning for pupils in all vulnerable groups
- Improve the quality of support for pupils in all vulnerable groups in the classroom
- Continue to explore the use of new technologies to support pupils in all vulnerable groups in accessing their learning.

Promoting Equality

In order to meet our objectives, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL has identified the following priorities:

- The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will provide auxiliary aids that are directly related to disabled pupil's educational needs as a reasonable adjustment, so they can integrate wholly in all parts of STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL life.
- Staff will ensure that all pupils are able to take part in extra-curricular activities and residential visits, and the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will monitor uptake of these visits to ensure no one is disadvantaged on the grounds of a protected characteristic.
- The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will ensure that all forms of prejudice-motivated bullying is taken seriously and dealt with equally and firmly.
- There will be differential schemes of work designed to meet the abilities and learning styles of all pupils.
- There will be a clearly defined disciplinary system stipulated in the Behavioural Policy, which will be consistently enforced.

- The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will increase access for disabled children and young people to the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL curriculum and will take necessary steps to meet pupils' needs by using a variety of approaches and planning reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, enabling them to take as full a part as possible in the activities of the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL.
- The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will ensure there is adequate access to the physical environment of the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL.
- The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will improve the delivery of written information to disabled children and young people.
- The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will seek the views of advisory staff, outside agencies and local academies.
- Throughout the year, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will plan ongoing events to raise awareness of equality and diversity.

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will consult with stakeholders to establish equality objectives and draw up a plan based on information collected on protected groups and accessibility planning.

Equality objectives will be published at least every four years commencing on the date of the last publication.

All forms of prejudice-motivated bullying are taken seriously and dealt with equally and firmly. The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL has an Anti-Bullying Policy and a Behaviour Policy to cover the areas that are not within scope of the Equality Act.

Regular training will be given to both existing and new staff to ensure that they are aware of the process for reporting and following up incidents of prejudice-related bullying.

Addressing Prejudice-Related Incidents

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL is opposed to all forms of prejudice and we recognise that pupils and staff who experience any form of prejudice-related discrimination may fare less well in the education system.

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will ensure that pupils and staff are aware of the impact of prejudice in order to prevent any incidents from occurring.

If incidents continue to occur, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will address them immediately and report them through the appropriate procedure.

Curriculum

All pupils will be entitled to access a broad and balanced curriculum and to teaching and learning opportunities which meet their needs, including extra support where this has been identified as a statutory need.

When planning the curriculum, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will take every opportunity to promote and advance equality.

When teaching the curriculum, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will promote equality and will not subject individuals to discrimination.

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will develop an appropriate curriculum for all pupils in all vulnerable groups.

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will ensure PSHE lessons are designed for pupils to develop their knowledge of the world and the importance of equality.

Employment Provisions

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all and ensuring that all stages of recruitment and selection are fair. Recruitment and selection procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Where a candidate is known personally to a member of the selection panel it will be declared before shortlisting takes place. It may then be necessary to change the selection panel to ensure that there is no conflict of interest and that equal opportunities principles are adhered to.

As an employer, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL strives to ensure that discrimination and harassment is eliminated in our employment practice and we actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce.

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will not discriminate against a potential employee in respect of whether to offer a job or the terms on which a job is offered. With regards to existing employees, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will not discriminate against an individual in respect of the benefits, facilities and services it offers including training opportunities, promotion or dismissal (including discipline and suspension). All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit, ability and in compliance with the law.

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments in relation to disability for employees or potential employees and will ensure that staff with disabilities have access to appropriate support in the form of aids, adaptations and other specialist services and will make reasonable adjustments to arrangements or practices to alleviate disadvantage.

More information about our procedures relating to staff can be found in the following SMBC policies:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

Enquiries about health and disability:

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will not enquire about the health of an applicant for a job until a job offer has been made, unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work for the position that has been applied for.

In some instances, the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL may decide to ask necessary health questions after a job offer has been made to an individual. In such a situation the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will ensure that health-related questions are targeted, necessary and relevant to the job applied for.

Training:

All staff will receive equal opportunities training which will include disability awareness / equality. This training will be part of staff induction as well as the CPD programme. All staff will receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will ensure that no member of staff is denied access to any form of training because of an inaccessible venue or because the provision does not account for their disability. Staff with disabilities will be actively encouraged to attend course which will support their career progression and personal development.

Staff discipline and suspension

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated fairly and consistently and this is held to account through our staff appraisal discipline, conduct, and grievance policies.

Staff performance will be monitored, and we expect that staff will feel able to voice complaints and grievances in confidence, trusting that the STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will deal with their grievances fully, promptly, and fairly.

Collecting and Using Information

The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will collect equality information for the purpose of:

- Identifying key issues, e.g. unlawful discrimination in teaching methods.
- Assessing performance, e.g. benchmarking against similar organisations locally or nationally.
- Taking action, e.g. adapting working practice to accommodate the needs of staff who share protected characteristics.
- The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will build an equality profile for staff to assist with identifying any issues within their recruitment regime. The STEPS Centre/ VIRTUAL SCHOOL will obtain the following information from their staff:

- Recruitment and promotion
- Numbers of part-time and full-time staff
- Pay and remuneration
- Training
- Return to work of women on maternity leave
- Return to work of disabled employees following sick leave relating to their disabilities
- Appraisals
- Grievances (including about harassment)
- Disciplinary action (including for harassment)
- Dismissals and other reasons for leaving

If requested, the Steps Centre/ Virtual School will provide the statutory information required with regard to equality responsibilities, i.e. information about gender pay cap or the fair treatment in the application of pay policies.

Related Policies

This document must be read, used, and applied alongside the school policies and procedures referred to below:

- Accessibility Plan
- Accessibility Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy

- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- SEND Policy and Information Report
- Curriculum Policy