	Vanguard Learning Trust *As a group of local primary and secondary schools, Vanguard Learning Trust's mission is to serve its local community by providing outstanding, inclusive education. We have a collective purpose and responsibility to provide effective teaching, through a curriculum based on equality of opportunity and entitlement that allows our students to shine both in and out of the classroom. Each school in the Trust has its own ethos, which also complements the Trust's vision and values, and the common aspiration that all students can achieve their potential.*

Equality duty policy
Part A: Trust-wide

November 2025

Contents

Part A: Trust-wide policy **3**

Section 1: Mission statement 3

Section 2: Mainstreaming equality into policy and practice 3

Section 3: Equal opportunities for staff 4

Section 4: Equality and the law 4

Section 5: Procedures for tackling prejudice-related incidents 5

Section 6: Review of progress and impact 5

Appendices 6

Appendix 1: The protected characteristics 7

Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities 8

Appendix 3: How the Trust provides all students with the opportunity to succeed 9

Appendix 4: Development of local equality action plan 10

Appendix 5: What is a discriminatory incident and how should it be dealt with? 11

Part A: Trust-wide policy

Section 1: Mission statement

1.1 Vision

As part of its core vision, Vanguard Learning Trust seeks to act as a 'model learning Trust', adopting best practice in all areas of its operation. The Trust believes in delivering a broad and inclusive education offer for all students. It believes that all students should be stretched and challenged to the limits of their individual ability and that both academic and co-curricular opportunities should be equally accessible to all.

1.2 Core principles

Trust policy and practice seeks to provide an environment that is free from discrimination against students, staff, associates, parents/carers and visitors. The Trust seeks to ensure that all individuals, current or potential, are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential. It believes that diversity in any learning community is a strength, which should be respected by all who learn, visit and work there. In addition to complying with this policy, each school within the Trust may issue local policies detailing what further steps will be taken to ensure equality at a local level. All schools will, in particular, issue their equalities action plan and accessibility plan.

1.3 Equality Act 2010

The Trust seeks to prevent any form of unlawful or unfair discrimination, direct or indirect, overt or covert, on the basis of the nine protected characteristics **(see Appendix 1)** under the Equality Act 2010. The Trust will additionally seek to prevent any form of unlawful or unfair discrimination, direct or indirect, overt or covert on the basis of socio-economic background and special education needs (SEN) status. In order to fulfil this expectation, the Trust will aspire to:

- promote good relations between individuals from different groups;
- recognise and develop the diversity of background, skills and talent within the current and potential staff body;
- foster a culture based on trust and mutual respect;
- collect and monitor data to assist in the identification and removal of barriers to the equality of opportunity;
- communicate to staff, students and others in the promotion of equal opportunities and the school's procedures to sustain it; and
- deal with breaches of policy and procedures in accordance with the relevant staff/student disciplinary process.

All stakeholders are responsible for promoting equality across the Trust (see **Appendix 2** for roles and responsibilities).

Section 2: Mainstreaming equality into policy and practice

2.1 Equality into policy and practice

Vanguard Learning Trust provides students with the opportunity to succeed and to reach the highest level of personal achievement (see **Appendix 3** for examples of how this will be achieved).

2.2 Admissions and exclusions

Local admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and do not discriminate on race, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation or socio-economic factors. Exclusions will always be based on the Trust's behaviour policy. Exclusion data will be monitored closely and used as a vehicle to formulate preventative strategies.

Section 3: Equal opportunities for staff

3.1 Implementation of equal opportunities

Vanguard Learning Trust is committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment. The Trust seeks to reach the widest possible labour market when seeking to recruit new staff. All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law.

3.2 The recruitment process

The Trust specifically commits to the following:

- advertisements, be they internal or external, will not indicate, or appear to indicate, an intention to discriminate in selection for recruitment, promotion or transfer;
- public advertisements will not be confined unjustifiably to geographical areas or media publications which would disproportionately reduce the number of applications from a certain group;
- eligibility criteria and tests used for recruitment and promotion will be related to job requirements and will be non-discriminatory. Criteria and tests will be reviewed to ensure they do not have a disproportionate impact on particular groups or individuals;
- selection panels will be provided with anonymised application forms when shortlisting to ensure gender, sex, racial and ethnic fairness;
- selection panels will discuss their potential biases at the start of the interview process; and
- selection panel decisions and the reasons for decisions will be recorded at each stage of the process. All documentation will be retained for six months then securely destroyed.

3.3 Employer duties

As an employer, the Trust is committed to ensuring that discrimination, victimisation and harassment is eliminated in employment practice and that equality is actively promoted across all groups within the workforce, particularly for those with protected characteristics (outlined in **Appendix 1**). Actions to ensure this commitment is met include**:**

- operating a process of blind recruitment in the shortlisting stage, to ensure decisions are free of possible discrimination;
- asking applicants to complete an equality monitoring form, where they are asked to disclose the information they wish to disclose. This is held within schools or the central team for monitoring purposes;
- requiring selection panels to identify any biases they may have before interviewing candidates;
- monitoring recruitment and retention via exit interviews;
- opportunities to explore unconscious bias with staff and school leaders;
- providing relevant professional development opportunities for staff; and
- encouraging school senior leadership teams to be proactive in ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

Section 4: Equality and the law

4.1 Local equality action plans

Each school within Vanguard Learning Trust will produce its own local equality action plan (LEAP) that should be updated at least once every 4 years. This will outline the actions local schools will take to meet the general duties detailed below. These plans may be downloaded from schools' websites.

4.2 Community cohesion

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to the Education Act 2002, introducing a duty on the schools' responsibility to promote community cohesion. Community cohesion encompasses promoting good relations between students from different races, faiths/beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds. The duty came into force on 1 September 2007. Whilst this legislation is for

maintained schools, there is an equivalent provision in the Trust's Master Funding Agreement (click here) in clause 1.14 which states the following: *'To the extent that it is compatible with the Academy Trust fulfilling its charitable purpose of advancing education in the United Kingdom for the public benefit, the Academy Trust must ensure that each of its Academies is at the heart of its community, promoting community cohesion and sharing facilities with other schools and/or other educational institutions and the wider community.'*

4.3 Consultation and involvement
It is a requirement that each school within Vanguard Learning Trust produces a LEAP. This is a statement of local actions which will be taken to ensure compliance with the equality duty. The progress section of the LEAP should be reviewed by the local governing body on an annual basis. Schools should actively seek input from its staff, students and parents/carers on the development of the LEAP (see **Appendix 4).** Each school will publish a copy of its LEAP on its local school website.

Section 5: Procedures for tackling prejudice-related incidents

5.1 Description of harassment
Harassment on account of all of the protected characteristics is unacceptable and is not tolerated within any school environment within Vanguard Learning Trust. Harassment has a legal definition under the Equality Act: Unwanted behaviour that you find offensive, where the other person's behaviour is because: you have a protected characteristic or there is any connection with a protected characteristic. Unwanted behaviour could include:

- spoken or written abuse
- offensive emails
- tweets or comments on websites and social media
- images and graffiti
- physical gestures
- facial expressions
- banter that is deemed offensive

5.2 Procedures
All staff are expected to deal with any discriminatory and prejudice-related incidents that may occur. They are expected to know how to identify and challenge prejudice and stereotyping; and to support the full range of diverse needs according to a student's individual circumstances. All incidents of harassment or bullying are dealt with by the member of staff present, escalating to a class teacher/headteacher where necessary. All incidents are reported to the headteacher and reported to the local governing body and board of trustees (see **Appendix 5**). Some incidents may lead to consideration under child protection. In these cases the school's child protection procedures will be followed, which are outlined in Part B of the safeguarding policy.

Section 6: Review of progress and impact

6.1 Review of progress
This policy has been reviewed and agreed by the board of trustees of Vanguard Learning Trust. In addition, local governing bodies are responsible for the regular review of LEAPs. In line with legislative requirements, local governing bodies will review progress against their LEAP and accessibility plan annually and review the entire plan and accompanying action plans on a three-year cycle. A template will be provided for the review and will be a standing item for the summer term meetings.

6.2 Review of impact
Individual schools will make regular assessments of students' learning and use this information to track student progress. As part of this process, they will regularly monitor achievement by ethnicity, gender and disability, to ensure that all groups of students are making the best possible progress, and take appropriate action to address any gaps.

Version history

First issue/revision date	Approved by	Summary of changes if not first issue
December 2025	VLT Board of Trustees	Section 3.3: Language around employer duties has been updated following discussion with central team staff
May 2023	VLT Board of Trustees	Policy updated following feedback provided by Equaliteach
July 2022	VLT Board of Trustees	Date of next review
July 2018	VLT Board of Trustees	First issue as a MAT policy

Appendices

Appendix 1: The protected characteristics
Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities
Appendix 3: How the Trust provides all students with the opportunity to succeed
Appendix 4: Development of local equality action plan
Appendix 5: What is a discriminatory incident and how should it be dealt with?

Appendix 1: The protected characteristics

The nine protected characteristics are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity/paternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnerships

Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities

The role of trustees/local governing bodies

- The Board of Trustees has set out its commitment to equal opportunities in this plan and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that the Trust is fully inclusive to students, and responsive to their needs based on their protected characteristics.
- Both the Board of Trustees and Local Governing Bodies seek to ensure that people are not discriminated against when applying for jobs within the Trust on grounds of their protected characteristics
- Local governing bodies take all reasonable steps to ensure that their local school environment gives access to people with disabilities, and also strive to make school communications as inclusive as possible for parents, carers and students.
- The Trust welcomes all applications to join the school, whatever a child's socio-economic background or protected characteristic.
- The local governing body ensures that no child is discriminated against whilst in school on account of their race, sex or disability.

The role of the headteacher (and senior leader responsible for equalities)

- It is the headteacher's role to implement the school's LEAP and s/he/they is supported by the local governing body in doing so.
- It is the headteacher's role to ensure that all staff are aware of the LEAP, and that teachers apply these guidelines fairly in all situations.
- The headteacher ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to this plan, so that no-one is discriminated against when it comes to employment or training opportunities.
- The headteacher promotes the principle of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum, and promotes respect for other people and equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life.
- The headteacher regards all incidents of unfair treatment and any incidents of bullying or discrimination with due seriousness.

The role of all staff: teaching and non-teaching

- All staff will ensure that all students are treated fairly, equally and with respect, and will maintain awareness of the school's LEAP.
- All staff will strive to provide material that gives positive images based on the protected characteristics and challenges stereotypical images.
- All staff will challenge any incidents of prejudice or harassment and record any serious incidents, drawing them to the attention of the headteacher.
- Teachers support the work of support staff and encourage them to intervene in a positive way against any discriminatory incidents.

Appendix 3: How the Trust provides all students with the opportunity to succeed

The Trust adopts the following in order to provide all students with the opportunity to succeed:

- take reasonably practicable steps to ensure individual buildings are as accessible as possible, given the age and design of the buildings;
- seek to deploy, where reasonably practicable, support staff to assist students in assessing curriculum areas;
- use contextual data to improve the ways in which support is provided to all of the protected characteristics;
- monitor achievement data by ethnicity, gender and disability and action any gaps;
- take account of the achievement of all students when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets;
- ensure equality of access for all students and prepare them for life in a diverse society;
- use materials that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of the protected characteristics, and which avoid language or images which may reinforce stereotypes;
- promote attitudes and values that will challenge prejudice and discriminatory behaviour or prejudice;
- provide opportunities for students to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures;
- seek to deliver an extra-curricular offer which caters for the interests and abilities of all students;
- seek to involve all parents/carers in supporting their child's education;
- encourage classroom and staffroom discussion of equality issues which reflect on social stereotypes, expectations and the impact on learning; and
- include teaching and classroom-based approaches appropriate for the whole school population, which are inclusive and reflective of the student body.

Appendix 4: Development of local equality action plan

Schools should actively seek input from its staff, students and parents/carers on the development of the LEAP in the following ways:

- through any mechanism through which parental views are sought and offered (eg. parent questionnaires, parents' evenings, one-to-one meetings etc.);
- through staff meetings/INSET, line management meetings and the performance management review process;
- through feedback from school councils, whole school surveys on children's attitudes to self and school etc.;
- discussions at annual reviews of educational health care plans (EHCPs); and
- feedback at local governing body meetings.

Appendix 5: What is a discriminatory incident and how should it be dealt with?

Harassment on grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or other factors such as socio-economic status, can take many forms including verbal or physical abuse, name calling, exclusion from groups and games, unwanted looks or comments, jokes and graffiti. A racist incident is defined by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (1999) as: '*any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.*'

Types of discriminatory incident

Types of discriminatory incidents that can occur are listed below. It is worth noting that this is not an exhaustive list:

- physical assault against a person or group because of their colour, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender;
- use of derogatory names, insults and jokes;
- racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory graffiti;
- provocative behaviour such as wearing racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory badges or insignia;
- bringing discriminatory material into school;
- verbal abuse and threats;
- incitement of others to discriminate or bully due to victim's race, disability, gender or sexual orientation;
- discriminatory comments in the course of discussion;
- attempts to recruit others to discriminatory organisations and groups;
- ridicule of an individual for difference e.g. food, music, religion, dress etc; and
- refusal to co-operate with other people on grounds of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Responding to and reporting incidents

It should be clear to students and staff how they report incidents. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should view dealing with incidents as vital to the well-being of the whole school. A suggested procedure for responding and reporting in Figure 1.
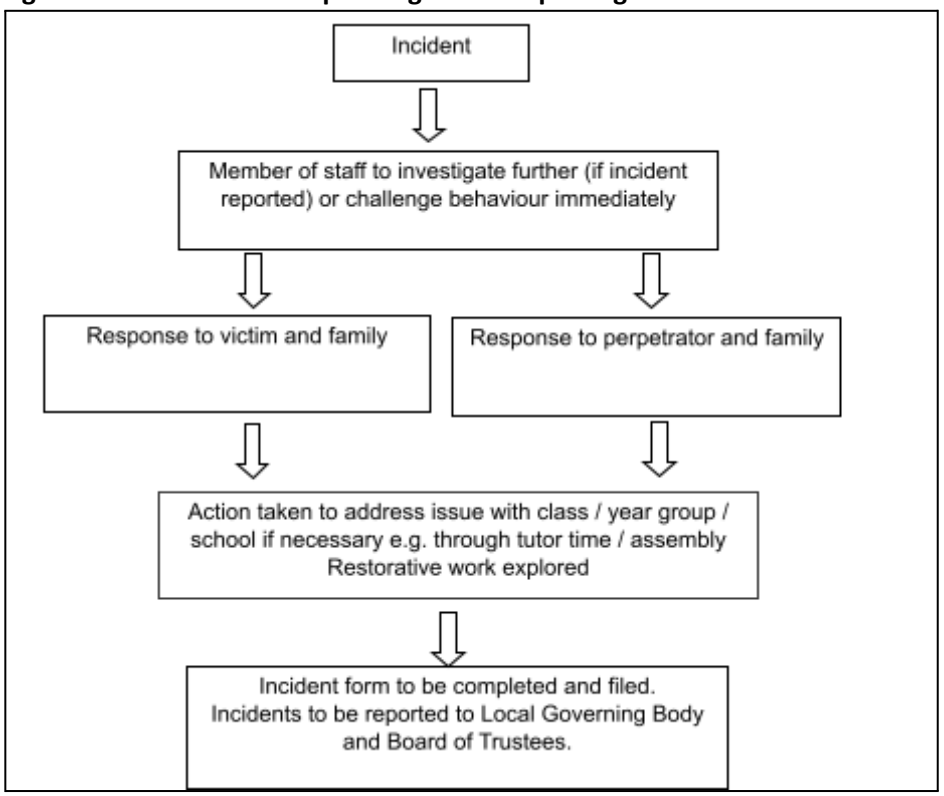
Figure 1: Procedure for responding to and reporting incidents