

*You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. Matthew 5:14-15*

Edwinstree Middle School  
A Voluntary Controlled Church of England School



# ***Equality Scheme & Plan***

**Adopted :** January 2024  
**Review:** January 2025

As a Christian school we recognise the unique and wonderful in everyone.  
As a community we support one another to flourish, and live life in all its fullness.

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## Vision, Values and Aims: Our equality vision and the values that underpin school life

As a Christian school we recognise the unique and wonderful in everyone. As a community we support one another to flourish, and live life in all its fullness. **mage". This bible quote teaches us that we all have wonderfulness to identify and develop their own '**

### Equality Aims at Edwinstree

All our children, whatever age, sex, race, ability, cultural background or religion, are supported to achieve their potential in the areas of knowledge, skills and personal development. We work hard to support each student to own their individuality and celebrate their difference.

The aims and Purposes of Learning in our school are to:

- Provide all our children with a safe and happy school in which learning is valued.
- Provide a stimulating so that high standards can be reached.
- Encourage a sense of community within the school, which promotes mutual responsibility, further developed by involvement in the wider community.
- Work with children to develop an awareness of self, sensitivity and tolerance towards others, respecting and appreciating each other's feelings, views and capabilities.
- Help children to further develop our values, and the confidence to use these values to help support their life choices.
- Encourage children to extend their range of interests and natural enthusiasm, allowing them to develop as individuals, with confidence and self-esteem.
- Promote and strengthen the bonds between school and home, believing that children's needs are best served by close co-operation between staff, parents and children.
- Help children develop the social skills required to establish good relationships with other children and adults, in work and play situations, working co-operatively together.
- Ensure that all children have access to equitable learning opportunities, and through example, are encouraged to form ideas that are not based on pre-judgement, or stereotyping.

## Guiding principles

### **Principle 1: All learners are of equal value**

We see all learners and potential learners, and their parents and carers, as of equal value:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and gender identity
- whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background
- whatever their sexual identity.

### **Principle 2: We recognise and respect difference**

Treating people equally (Principle 1 above) does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. We call this equity.

Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

- disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences are recognised
- religion, belief or faith background
- sexual identity.

### **Principle 3: We foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging**

We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non-disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents
- mutual respect and good relations, and an absence of sexual and homophobic harassment.

### **Principle 4: We observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development**

We ensure that policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and sexual identity, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity.

### **Principle 5: We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist**

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In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between groups, for example:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- genders.

### **Principle 6: We consult and involve widely**

We engage with a range of groups and individuals to ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones, for example:

- disabled people, as well as non-disabled
- people from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- all genders
- the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as the heterosexual community.

### **Principle 7: Society as a whole should benefit**

We intend that our policies and activities should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in public life of:

- disabled people, as well as non-disabled
- people of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- all genders
- the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as the heterosexual community.

### **Principle 8: We base our practices on sound evidence**

We maintain and publish quantitative and qualitative information showing our compliance with the public sector equality duty (PSED) set out in clause 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

### **Principle 9: Objectives**

We formulate and publish specific and measurable objectives, based on the evidence we have collected and published (principle 8) and the engagement in which we have been involved (principle 7). The objectives which we identify take into account national and local priorities and issues, as appropriate. We keep our equality objectives under review and report annually on progress towards achieving them.

## **School Context: The characteristics of our school**

Edwinstree Middle School is a Church of England Middle school of just under 480 students involved. In the last 5 years as the town has expanded, and 40% of the expansion has been in social housing, we have seen an increase in students who are economically disadvantaged, and or multi- vulnerable.

The school has grown in popularity in the last 5 years and now has a waiting list. With the expansion of the town, this has meant the towns intake of students in the last two years have been from the local area SG9 whereas previously one third of the intake came from the Stevenage area. This change has seen a decline in diversity with our minority groups shrinking.

The only exception to this is our Muslim community has increased to 5 students within the school from a base of 1.

The Published Admission Number (PAN) for every year group is 120

SEND students have increased dramatically since COVID including a significant growth in EHCP's from below Hertfordshire and the National to above both in July 2023. 4.2%. The number of students on our register is:

Wrap Around Care Provision consists of Breakfast Club and After School Club for 4-9 year olds. Extra-Curricular Clubs after school also support our wrap around care offer.

There are currently 7% of pupils with English as an Additional Language. Children have a range of needs and suitable adaptations are made as and when necessary to allow full access the curriculum.

### **Legal Background: The duties that underpin our scheme**

The purpose of this scheme is to set out how our practice has due regard for the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- **advance equality of opportunity** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- **foster good relations** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

### **The Specific Duties of the Equality Act enable schools to meet their obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The specific duties require schools to:**

- Publish annually information quantitative and qualitative, showing compliance with the PSED set out in clause 149 of the Equality Act 2010.
- To set every four years one or more specific measurable equality objectives that further the aims of the equality duty.

### **Protected Characteristics**

The Equality Act 2010 protects pupils from discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics. The protected characteristics for the school's provisions are:

- age (staff only)
- disability
- ethnicity and race
- gender (sex)
- gender identity and reassignment
- pregnancy, maternity and breast feeding
- religion and belief
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership.

### **Disability**

The disability provisions in this Act are different from those for other protected characteristics in a number of ways, including a more complex definition of what constitutes discrimination.

Schools may, and often must, treat disabled pupils more favourably than non-disabled pupils by making reasonable adjustments to ensure that a disabled pupil can benefit from what they offer to the same extent that a pupil without a disability can.

At Edwinstree, we implement an Accessibility Policy & Plan which aim to:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum
- improve the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided
- improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

### **Roles and Responsibilities: Chain of accountability**

The Governing Body, supported by the Headteacher and staff, is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this scheme.

#### **Commitment to implementation**

The Headteacher retains overall responsibility for ensuring that the objectives within the plan are delivered effectively. All staff are responsible for delivering the scheme both as employees and as it relates to their area of work.

<b>Responsibility for</b>	<b>Key person/s</b>
Single equality scheme	Head, /SENDCo
Disability equality (including bullying incidents)	Head, Deputy Head, /SENDCo
SEND (including bullying incidents)	Head, Deputy Head, /SENDCo
Accessibility	Head, /SENDCo
Gender equality (including bullying incidents)	Head, Deputy Head, /SENDCo
Race equality (including racist incidents)	Head, Deputy Head, /SENDCo
Equality and diversity in curriculum content	SLT
Equality and diversity in pupil achievement	SLT
Equality and diversity – behaviour and exclusions	Deputy Head
Participation in all aspects of school life	SLT
Impact assessment	SLT
Stakeholder consultation	Head /SENDCo
Policy review	Head
Communication and publishing	Head, /SENDCo

#### **Commitment to review**

The school equality scheme will be aligned with the School Development Plan. Its implementation will be monitored within the school’s self-evaluation and other review processes, as well as being updated at least annually. Following this regular impact assessment, the whole equality scheme, including the plan will be reviewed each year.

The basic principle underlying the new specific duties is that of ‘transparency’ which ensures that we fulfil the aims of the Equality Duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups. Transparency means being open about the information on which we base our decisions, on what to publish and how.

### **Commitment to publish**

The Equality Scheme is available for viewing within our policy documents on the school website; this will be published annually. It will be shared in detail with anyone for whom it is particularly relevant.

### **Commitment to action**

#### **Governors will:**

- provide leadership and drive for the development and regular review of the school's equality and other policies;
- ensure the accountability of the Headteacher and senior staff for the communication and implementation of school policies;
- congratulate examples of good practice from the school and among individual managers, staff and pupils;
- ensure there is a consistent response to incidents, e.g. bullying cases and racist incidents;
- ensure that the school carries out the letter and the spirit of the statutory duties (and ensuring the provision of 'returns' to the local authority).

#### **Headteacher and senior staff will:**

- initiate and oversee the development and regular review of equality policies and procedures;
- consult pupils, staff and stakeholders in the development and review of the policies;
- ensure the effective communication of the policies to all pupils, staff and stakeholders;
- ensure that all staff are trained as necessary to carry out the policies;
- oversee the effective implementation of the policies;
- hold line managers accountable for effective policy implementation;
- provide appropriate role models for all managers, staff and pupils;
- highlight good practice from departments, individual managers, staff and pupils;
- provide mechanisms for the sharing of good practice;
- ensure a consistent response to incidents, e.g. bullying cases and racist incidents;
- ensure that the school carries out its statutory duties effectively.

#### **All staff, teaching and non-teaching, will:**

- contribute to consultations and reviews;
- raise issues with line managers which could contribute to policy review and development;
- maintain awareness of the school's current equality policy and procedures;
- implement the policy as it applies to staff and pupils;
- behave with respect and fairness to all colleagues and pupils, carrying out the letter and spirit of the school's equality scheme;
- provide a consistent response to incidents, e.g. bullying cases and racist incidents;
- contribute to the implementation of the school's equality scheme.

#### **All pupils will:**

- respect everyone in the school;
- try to be friends with everyone;
- listen to their teacher and each other.

**All parents/carers will** support the school's commitment to equality.

We comply fully with legislation which protects our staff (including teachers, teaching assistants, supervisors and student teachers) from discrimination on the grounds of gender,

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transsexual status, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age. With regard to disability, we make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a disabled person being at substantial disadvantage in comparison with a person who is not disabled. This includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, training and employment practices (such as dress codes) and disciplinary procedures.

- We make efforts to ensure that the diversity of our workforce reflects that of our local community and wider society.
- We will ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff and act on incidents of harassment and discrimination recognising that our staff may be either victims or perpetrators.
- We will provide regular training for staff to enable them to deal effectively with prejudice-related incidents
- Tackling discrimination and anti-bullying reporting and recording all forms of prejudice-related incidents for example racism, homophobia, negative views of disabled people or sexism.

## Engagement

The interests of all stakeholders have been taken into account and incorporated into this scheme in accordance with all statutory duties and legislative requirements.

As part of a continually developing process, the senior leadership team and Governing Body encourage its stakeholders to provide input and feedback at any time. We welcome the participation and involvement of people from broad and diverse backgrounds and of different abilities.

In accordance with Edwinstree's commitment to the ongoing monitoring, development and enactment of this scheme, all comments and suggestions relating to the Equality Scheme will be considered during the annual review of this document, or on an ad hoc basis, whichever is appropriate. We will continue to consult various stakeholders on this scheme and plan.

Annually, we ask our parents to complete a questionnaire where equality issues can be raised. In addition, our consultation is also completed through pupil questionnaires, class discussion, work with pupil focus groups such as the School Council and staff questionnaires.

We are always open to talk to about any issues of equality and diversity. Within the school we have a Dynamic Diversity Group who allow our students a clear voice in the plan.

Events at school (e.g. assemblies, harvest festival, visitors) and school trips (e.g. to local synagogues and churches) explore different cultures and promote understanding of different religions. When deciding what to do to tackle equality issues, we will consult and engage both with people affected by our decisions - parents, pupils, staff, members of the local community – and with people who have special knowledge which can inform the school's approach, such as disability equality groups and other relevant special interest organisations. Evidence of this engagement will be included in the published material showing how the duty has been addressed.

Any queries or comments relating to this Scheme should be made via the school office.



## Using information – Equality Impact Assessment, Data and Other Information

Equality Impact Assessments help us to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against certain individuals or groups and that the positive duties are promoted. It is a way to ensure we meet diverse needs of our pupils and staff and that diversity, equality and inclusion run through all areas of school life.

At the time of review of individual school policies, an assessment will be made of the effectiveness of each policy in relation to equality and diversity, and any improvements or amendments will be made accordingly.

The effectiveness of Edwinstree's equality scheme, and any initiatives that arise from it, will be consistently monitored by staff, the senior leadership team and the Governing Body, and the Scheme and resulting actions will be developed accordingly.

The School will use existing procedures for reviewing the impact of provision for children with disabilities e.g. support plans, annual reviews and structured conversations.

External validation e.g. parent surveys.

### **Commissioned services (procurement)**

When procuring goods and services from external suppliers, we ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our equality scheme, and we require similar compliance by any sub-contractors.

## Edwinstree's Equality Plan

### Key objectives to action

- **Objective 1: Increase staff, pupil and parents' understanding, awareness, knowledge, skills and acceptance of different SEND.**

**Why we have chosen this objective:** We have a diverse and increasing range of SEND across our classes and a particular increase in complex SEND across all cohorts.

**To achieve this objective, we plan to:** Ensure that all staff feel confident to effectively support all pupils with SEND by providing a range of staff training, including Autism in Schools (Level 1), Therapeutic Approaches to Behaviour (TAB) and adaptations to the curriculum.

We will develop understanding and support of mental health across pupils by setting up a Peer Mentor Pupil Voice Group. We would also like to develop a culture of understanding and empathy across our parent community for those pupils with SEND by providing workshops. This year we will be completing a Fullness day. Progress will be tracked and recorded for this objective.

- **Objective 2: Robustly monitor and analyse pupil attendance by race, gender, pupil premium and special educational need or disability and act on any trends or patterns in the data that require additional action.**

**Why we have chosen this objective:** Attendance continues to be a concern with a number of persistent absentees with attendance below 90% . Despite significant interventions the problems continue to persist and grow.

**To achieve this objective, we plan to:** Review and develop our attendance policy which will include the systems to monitor, support and reward attendance. Some of these systems include; attendance prize draws for 100% attendance, carefully planned calendar dates, bespoke programs for children at risk of school-based avoidance, including late forms completed, persistent absent meetings and support from the DHT.

Progress will be tracked and recorded for this objective.

- **Objective 3: Increase staff, pupil and parents' understanding, awareness and tolerance of different religious faiths and cultures.**

**Why we have chosen this objective:** Pupils, parents and staff at Edwinstree belong to a range of diverse religious faiths that should be celebrated and respected within the school and wider community.

**To achieve this objective, we plan to:** Provide more opportunities for pupils to participate in cultural and spiritual visits and encourage visitors to the school share their experiences of being part of a faith. Develop a student voice group to support and celebrate difference.  
Progress will be tracked and recorded for this objective.

- **Objective 4: Increase understanding, awareness and tolerance of pupils, staff and parents who identify as LGBTQIA+ community.**

**Why we have chosen this objective:** An increased number of pupils, parents and staff at Edwinstree identify or may identify as **LGBTQIA+** and need to be supported and respected equally.

**To achieve this objective, we plan to:** Promote respect and understanding through staff meetings and the effective delivery of the updated PSHE and SRE curriculum and policy.

Progress will be tracked and recorded for this objective.