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**Compliance:** This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Accessibility Plan.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Options Trent Acres is committed to ensuring that we do not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of their race, nationality, disability or special educational need, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion/ belief. This is in line with the 1976 Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act of 2006 and covers both direct and indirect discrimination. At Options Trent Acres school we will treat everyone within our school community fairly, celebrating difference and meeting different needs so that all members of our school community are free to live, learn and enjoy school life.

We are fully committed to:

- Celebrating the cultural diversity of our community and show respect for all minority groups
- Providing a supportive, inclusive and empowering learning community for all pupils and adults
- Tackling discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender identity (gender reassignment and transgender), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Creating and fostering good relations between different groups, within school and within our wider community.

Options Trent Acres recognises that it has to make special efforts to ensure that all potentially vulnerable groups of learners are helped to fulfil their potential, including:

- Boys and girls, men and women
- All minority ethnic groups including Gypsy Roma Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers
- Pupils and others with special educational needs
- Pupils and others with a range of disabilities
- Looked After Children and their carers
- Children with poor records of attendance at school
- Children at risk from significant harm
- Children living with “vulnerable’ adults

In our school, regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the attainment and achievement of each individual student enables us to highlight areas where additional intervention may be needed.

This policy, and the process of self-evaluation which informs the resultant action plan is the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team of Options Trent Acres. It is reviewed as part of the school's governance process.

## **2.0 THE LEGAL DUTIES**

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This document is written with very close reference to these key documents:

“Developing Equality Schemes to meet the three existing duties”: Equalities and Human Rights Commission (2009)

“Developing a Single Equality Policy for you school”: Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (2010)

It is also written in compliance with the following legal frameworks:

- The Race Relations Act 1976 (amended 2000)
- The Human Rights Act (1998)
- The Employment Equality Regulations (2003)
- The Equality Act (Part 2) (2006)
- Article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratified by UK in 1969)
- Articles 2, 23, 28 and 29 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (ratified by UK in 1991)
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001)
- The Disability Discrimination Act (2005)
- The Disability Equality Duty (2006)
- Article 24 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified by UK in 2009)
- The Gender Equality Duty (2007)
- The Sex Discrimination (Gender re-assignment) Regulations (2003)
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003)
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2007)
- Articles 10, 14 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (ratified by UK in 1986)

This policy is also written with due regard for the Equality Act 2011 and the Autism Strategy 2011

**We are responsible promoting equality and diversity wider than the nine characteristics (areas) covered by legislation. We work to remove barriers and we will not unfairly discriminate on any grounds.**

## **3.0 DEFINITIONS**

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**Equality** is about fairness and equality of opportunity, and advancing equality of opportunity involves treating people differently. People should not be treated the same. Some people may need extra help or adjustments to be part of the school community; this includes teachers, administration, cleaning or catering staff employed at the school as well as pupils, parents/guardians and school governors.

**Diversity** is about valuing people as individuals and learning from our differences. Our differences can be visible and non-visible. By promoting diversity, we can meet different needs creatively to ensure opportunities

are available to all and potential is fulfilled. We are able to meet our school's aims and objectives more efficiently by promoting a diversity friendly school culture

**Culture** is about the way we behave towards one another – school governors, all employees in the school, parents, pupils and the whole school community. It is about how we treat one another and respect our differences. Promoting diversity and a diversity-friendly culture helps to create a more productive school community.

### **The Equality Act 2010**

Relating to the Equality Act, there are nine 'protected characteristics' these are: age, disability, gender reassignment [transgender], marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion and belief (and having no belief), sex (gender) and sexual orientation. Please refer to our Curriculum Policy, our PSHE policy and our Relationships and Sex Education Policy to understand how the protected characteristics are taught, promoted and celebrated.

## **4.0 THE SCHOOL CONTEXT**

### **Options Trent Acres School is committed to:**

- elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different groups

a) Significant features of the social, cultural, linguistic, religious, disability diversity of pupils, and staff are as follows:

- All pupils at Options Trent Acres have a Statement of Educational Need (EHCP), specifying Complex Needs including Autistic Spectrum Disorder / noticeable autistic spectrum features, learning disabilities, learning difficulties, language disorders, ADHD, dyslexia, developmental delay, challenging behaviour and epilepsy.
- The makeup of staff and pupils reflects a range of cultural, social and religious backgrounds
- The vast majority of pupils have adverse childhood experiences and trauma. This can impact on their confidence, self-esteem and low expectations of self. Many have negative experience of school as a result of multiple placement breakdown prior to joining the school.

b) These figures compare to the population in the geographical area the school covers in the following ways:

Options Trent Acres is situated in the rural setting of Kings Bromley, Staffordshire. The closest city is Lichfield which is approximately 7 miles away and the town of Burton upon Trent is approximately 11 miles away. However geographically Options Trent Acres is within approximately a one hour's drive of Birmingham, Stoke, Leicester, Nottingham and Derby.

c) Reasonable adjustments made by our school to ensure that the equal opportunity of pupils and staff is ensured with regard to race, disability or special educational need, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief are as follows:

Recognising that some groups covered in this policy may have particular needs, Options Trent Acres:

- Completes an Accessibility Plan to consider changes that would need to be made on the arrival of a pupil or member of staff with a physical disability

- Work closely with the on-site clinical team. This comprises of Lead Clinical, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapists and Assistant Psychologists. Where appropriate, direct work is undertaken with pupils.
- Completes specific, targeted training to enable staff to meet the needs of individuals.
- Purchases and uses a range of specific equipment to enhance learning and support pupils
- Provides a range of extra-curricular activities to allow choice and access for all.

### **Supporting learners with particular needs:**

At Options Trent Acres , we recognise that the groups of pupils covered in this policy are more likely to have particular needs. Therefore as a school we:

- Provide a range of specialist rooms and small group teaching areas allowing individual, one-to-one and small group learning
  - Support individual pupils and / or families with difficulties over a given period of time (family crisis, behavioural incidents etc) using a mentoring or coaching approach as appropriate
  - Strive to identify particular needs as soon as possible to enable early support and/or intervention to take place. Options Trent Acres has a thorough process for assessment as part of our admission process
  - Prepare Individual Plans to focus on learning priorities, including targets as agreed through the Annual Education review of the EHCP.
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- Pupil mobility will be reviewed on an annual basis and trends and patterns identified.
  - There are currently no staff members with a disability.

d) Examples of how we seek the views of all our school community, and the wider community, including in relation to equality issues, are as follows:

- Consultation with parents/ carers about specific aspects (e.g. Transition Plans)
- Consultation with pupils about their education to support Annual Reviews
- Consultation with pupils via Independent Advocacy where available.
- Staff Meetings where data produced is thoroughly analysed and relevant outcomes fed into our School Development Plan
- Ongoing “listening” to pupils via all staff members, together with a visible and accessible Senior Leadership Team
- Parental Feedback Forms with Annual Reports

A high number of our pupils have experienced multiple placement breakdowns and many have not attended school for a considerable period of time. We need to fully consider the challenges for pupils who have had negative experiences, and the subsequent anxieties they may experience in attending school. These barriers are considered on an individual basis. To support pupils into the learning environment we will:

- Explain how the school operates via visits and meetings arranged as part of our admissions process
- Translate of key documents when this is appropriate
- Offer a range of ways of communicating between school and parents/ carers that meet parents’ circumstances and needs including: use of Class Dojo, telephone calls, teacher emails, other written reports, including provision of full Education Reports, face-to-face formal and informal meetings as appropriate. Parents are invited into school every half-term to talk through their child’s progress and targets.
- Explain how parents/ carers and others can help in school by encouraging their involvement in school life through supporting events and review meetings
- Encourage parents/ carers to support their child and keep them informed of school events via home school communication.

- Arrange regular meetings for parents/ carers of pupils feeling vulnerable or experiencing specific barriers to their learning/ wellbeing

e) Some examples (not a definitive list) of how we seek to address equality issues in our school and improve the access and experience of all equality groups are as follows:

- We offer a rich, broad and balanced curriculum which promotes positive understanding of different characteristics, recognises the contribution that individuals and groups with protected characteristics make to society, and challenges stereotyping and discrimination.
- Celebrate individual and personal success during assemblies, End of Term Celebration Assemblies and end of school year achievement days.
- We are a listening school, with an open-door policy. Pupils are encouraged to talk to their class TA, form tutor, or any member of pastoral staff or SLT.
- Our well-being Wednesday curriculum focuses heavily on protected characteristics, mental health, equalities, hate crime and safety ensuring pupils are equipped with knowledge and understanding and how to report concerns.
- Develop global curriculum coverage which celebrates difference, deliver a whole school curriculum, including PSHE and Sex and Relationships Education, (appropriate to individual needs and abilities) which promotes positive attitudes towards minority groups
- Through our house system, pupils will work alongside a wider set of peers, outside of their usual class groups. This helps to 'buddy up' children to ensure they feel happy, safe and secure around school.
- Ensure that meetings, including Annual Education Reviews, LAC or PEP Reviews are as comfortable and welcoming as possible
- Fund raising for local, national and international charities and developing understanding of the purpose and impact of the activity through whole school fundraising initiatives
- Encouraging student-led campaigns to appreciate those less fortunate through contributing locally to Harvest Festival and other faith group causes
- Ensuring a rich and relevant curriculum which celebrates diversity and cultural similarities and differences. In our development of a rich and flexible curriculum we strive to ensure that the curriculum equips pupils to actively promote community cohesion and ensures their understanding of faith and ethnic diversity and the common values underpinning society. For example:
  - Through our Humanities teaching, including Religious Studies and Citizenship, which explores a range of major religions.
  - Through the whole range of activities within school we encourage and promote appreciation of self and others, enjoyment of sharing leisure, work, effort, cooperation with staff and peers.
  - Through the sharing of musical performances with parents/ carers and the wider community
  - Through creative curriculum themes and special curriculum events which allow us to celebrate and explore cultural identity, customs and foods from around the world.

## 5.0 RATIONALE

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This Equality Policy is not a stand-alone document. Its main function is to present a set of principles which permeate all other school policies and practices. It is closely related to other key school documents, for example:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Subject Policies
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy

- Admissions Policy
- Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

As a school, we recognise that there are some core inclusive values that underpin this Equality Policy and ensure respect for all. These are:

- **Fairness:** no school policy or procedure will unfairly advantage or disadvantage any member of our school community
- **Trust:** we begin with the premise that all members of the school community can behave with good intent towards each other
- **Participation:** no member of our school community will be barred in any way from participating in any school activity which could be reasonably expected to be open to all.
- **Consultation and negotiation:** Representatives of different stakeholder groups within the School community (i.e. pupils, staff, parents/ carers) and of all seven identified diversity groups covered by this policy (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief) will be consulted over major policy decisions being taken by the School. Options Trent Acres will make an “equality impact assessment” in relation to any major policy decision. In some situations, where it is reasonable to predict that the ultimate decision will have a significant impact upon the experience in school of different stakeholders, including those within the seven identified groups, the school recognises that it will be appropriate to negotiate, rather than consult.
- **Collaboration:** we will work together as a team in which every member has a view and a voice which is worthy of consideration
- **Transparency:** the reasoning behind decisions made in our school will be open and subject to scrutiny.

We strive to build, within our school, our locality and the partnerships with which we are involved, a strong and cohesive community, which prepares young people for adult life in:

- A diverse, inclusive society
- A welcoming community that fosters positive relationships and values diversity as a rich learning resource
- A barrier-free community founded upon a joint sense of belonging.

**Every member of our school community will be challenged and held to account for upholding the rationale of this Equality Policy.** We recognise that individual members of staff, parents/ carers or pupils may have different views on a number of equality issues. Our main priority is not to demand that anyone changes their views but that, as a school, we clearly describe what the school considers acceptable/unacceptable and how everyone is expected to behave in school. No matter what individual people’s views might be, our first priority is to ensure that Options Trent Acres complies with every aspect of equality legislation and the duty to promote community cohesion.

## **6.0 OPTIONS TRENT ACRES’ APPROACH TO PROMOTING EQUALITY FOR ALL**

We work in the following ways to secure equality and respect for all **(these principles apply to all seven equality duties):**

**a) Current policy and practice in Options Trent Acres shows commitment to meeting the duty to promote race, disability, and gender equality for pupils, staff and parents. We address this by:**

- Ensuring that our Vision statement, aims and core values relate to every member of our school community.
- Ensuring that we regularly evaluate the impact of all school policies (particularly admissions and attendance, behaviour, target-setting, teaching and learning and performance management) on the equality groups as identified in this policy and take action to improve our policy and practice where necessary, through having specific actions on the School Development Plan.
- Ensuring that, wherever possible, the equality groups as identified in this policy are reflected in the language and images of all publications (including the school prospectus, publicity to promote school events, website).
- Ensuring that the school's policy on school uniform makes reasonable allowances for expressions of identity and ease of use for pupils who are disabled ("reasonable allowances" to be limited by the extent to which adaptation of the school uniform might be used to represent an affiliation to a group or belief which might not be in keeping with the other key principles laid out in this policy.) This includes empathy with pupils' sensory sensitivities about clothing.
- Ensuring that, wherever possible and without artificiality or unbalanced representation, there are positive images of the equality groups as identified in this policy, in school policies, in school publications, in learning resources and in displays.
- Ensuring that Options Trent Acres has clear, commonly understood processes for challenging inappropriate language or behaviour and/or prejudice.
- Ensuring that equality values are represented in the everyday language and behaviour evident in school and that senior leaders regularly monitor the school climate in relation to this, in order that tolerance levels in relation to language or behaviour are maintained.
- Ensuring that Options Trent Acres makes the strongest possible efforts to minimise any barrier to the participation and engagement of parents/ carers with regard to their child's development and in other aspects of school life.

**b) Options Trent Acres can clearly demonstrate how it assesses the impact on equalities of its current policies and practices on race, disability and gender equality for pupils, staff and parents. Our school addresses this by:**

- Ensuring that the school has consistent and reliable procedures for recording and reporting incidents of inappropriate language or behaviour towards the equality groups as identified in this policy.
- Ensuring that the school has monitoring data on attendance, exclusion and bullying and can analyse this with reference to the equality groups identified in this policy.

**c) Options Trent Acres has secure arrangements for ensuring equality of opportunity with regard to the recruitment, development and retention of employees. We address this by:**

- Ensuring that, whilst adhering to equalities law and fair recruitment practice, every attempt is made to achieve diversity in the workforce, which is representative of that within the school, the local community and the wider community.
- Ensuring that all aspects of employment, including recruitment, disciplinary issues, and complaints, allocation of responsibilities, professional development and opportunities for all staff to progress are monitored to ensure that equality is upheld as a central consideration when judgments and decisions are made.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of this Equality policy and wider equality issues through staff training and professional development and that this is an essential element of the induction training for all staff, alongside other key policies.

**d) Options Trent Acres can demonstrate equality with regard to the educational opportunities available to the pupils in the specified groups. We address this by:**

- Ensuring that there are opportunities for different viewpoints to be expressed and voices to be heard.

- Ensuring that, where possible and appropriate and without contrivance or artificiality, curriculum themes and content reflect the rights and interests of the equality groups as identified in this policy and promote greater tolerance towards them, across a breadth of curriculum which is wider than planned direct teaching within R.E., PSHE and citizenship and Sex and Relationships Education
- Ensuring that all of the equality groups as identified in this policy have the same opportunity to access educational visits and other school trips as any other student in the school.
- Ensuring that all pupils can participate equally in all aspects of school life, including after school activities.
- Ensuring school events or activities, including those arising after school, celebrate diversity.

## **7.0 ACTION PLANNING**

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Options Trent Acres recognises that it is a legal requirement to develop specific targets for each of the equality duties. These will be incorporated but clearly identified in the School Development Plan and the Accessibility Plan.

## **8.0 PREVENTING & DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH BULLYING & HARASSMENT**

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All pupils should be safe and feel valued as individuals, whatever characteristics they may have. Bullying and harassment of pupils, staff, parents, visitors and/or contractors by pupils on the basis of their identity (including a perceived characteristic, and by association with a protected characteristic) is unacceptable. Incidents will be logged, investigated and appropriate actions taken to prevent future incidents and to support the victim as outlined in the anti-bullying policy

Options Trent Acres recognises that the groups covered in this policy may be more vulnerable to bullying and harassment and all acts of reported bullying are acted upon swiftly, recorded and reported to parents (whenever this is identified as advantageous or necessary). They are analysed with a view to monitoring vulnerable groups. Incidents of racism are reported to the placing Local Authority.

All pupils have a Positive Behaviour Support Plan which incorporates the Individual Risk Assessment. Our approach to behaviour management is based on Autism Specific Strategies and strong relationships built on trust and mutual respect. This helps us to protect the most vulnerable whilst supporting and enabling all pupils to develop positive behaviour patterns.

## **9.0 SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES**

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The Senior Leadership Team will maintain a strategic overview of the currency and efficacy of this Single Equality Scheme. Leads for each target on the School Development Plan are clearly identified. The cycle for review of progress towards the equality targets on all future School Development Plans will be clearly laid out and will follow that for the plan as a whole.