

# Equal Opportunities in Schools Policy SO-0240

Date of issue	February 2021
Date reviewed	January 2022
Date of next review	January 2026
Version number	1.1
Policy lead	Education Directorate
Distribution	Education and Children's services
Date ratified by board	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2021

## 1. Purpose of this document

The purpose of this policy is to outline NAS and NASAT school's approach to Equal opportunities and meeting our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Under the Equality Act 2010, all schools have a duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality between different groups;
- Foster good relations between different groups; and
- Promote mental health and wellbeing.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils in NAS and NASAT schools and colleges and to all those that work for our organisation including employees, governors, and agency workers.

## 3. Approach

Our schools are committed to the need both to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality for pupils, staff and others using school facilities.

NAS and NASAT are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in line with the Equality Act 2010. We reduce disadvantages, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity, and promote diversity in terms of our pupils, our workforce and the community in which we work.

Equal opportunity is central to effective education services throughout all aspects of school/college life including curriculum, organisation, staffing and management. Our schools are committed to giving all pupils every opportunity to achieve the highest standards by:

- taking account of their varied experiences and needs;
- offering a broad and balanced curriculum;
- having high expectations of all pupils

Genuine equal opportunity will be promoted for all and positive steps taken to overcome any inequality.

NAS and NASAT schools will promote equal opportunities and strive to eliminate any discrimination, be it through racial, cultural, gender, disability, health, family status, age and any other protected characteristic (as defined by the Equality Act 2010), and to promote equal opportunities and good relationships between all individuals. Education services will work with parents/carers, family and the community to follow and promote good practice and tackle any discrimination. Services will ensure they are inclusive, respecting the needs and any values that are important to any individual or their family as appropriate. It is every staff member's responsibility to ensure equal opportunities is an integral part of service delivery.

Due to the nature of autism and other accompanying learning disabilities, particular attention will be focused on each individual's autistic needs. This will allow all members of the school community the opportunity to develop to their full potential. All members of the school will be entitled to a balanced, broadly-based and relevant curriculum, where a wide range of achievements celebrated. Pupils will be made to feel that they are valued, that their identity is respected and that their placement is a secure and welcoming environment.

Equal opportunities applies to all areas of school/college life, including classroom, corridor, playgrounds, canteen and staffroom and encompasses management meetings, parents' meetings and such like.

The NAS and NASAT advocates a whole school approach to equal opportunities, and aims to involve all members of the school community in its development and implementation.

## 4. Operational delivery

NAS and NASAT schools value diversity and are committed to encouraging involvement at all levels from under-represented groups. We recognise that schools benefit from governing bodies and staff teams that contain a mix of people from all walks of life and backgrounds, who can bring different viewpoints, experience and skills.

We will assist our pupils in achieving to their very best potential. Where pupils experience barriers to their success we will work with them to address these in a sensitive and sympathetic way. We will teach our pupils the importance of equality and what forms discrimination can take and the impact discrimination can have. We will also encourage our pupils to make their own commitment to promoting equality.

We will not discriminate on any of the grounds listed below (known as the Protected Characteristics) save where such discrimination is permitted by law.

The Protected Characteristics that apply to schools are:

- Age (in relation to staff only)
- Disability (which includes mental health, encompassing prejudiced assumptions, attitudes or behaviours related to mental health)
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and civil partnership (in relation to staff only)
- Pregnancy and Maternity;
- Race;
- Religion Faith or Belief;
- Sex; and
- Sexual orientation.

Examples of permitted discrimination are:

1. A school may arrange pupils in classes based on age.
2. A school may take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils of one racial group if this is a proportionate means of dealing with the issue.

We will not accept any of the following:

- Direct or Indirect Discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation

NAS and NASAT will comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty giving due regard to that duty when making decisions, taking actions and developing policies.

In order to promote Equal Opportunities our schools will:

- Staff and pupils will not discriminate against others.
- Good practice in the use of terminology and images will be adhered to.
- Resources are audited and purchased to reflect all groups positively.
- Posters are printed in languages spoken in the community.
- A translator or interpreter will be available for parents with regard to reports, annual reviews and meetings if required.
- Reports will be typed in large print if necessary and support for people with hearing disabilities at meetings may be arranged.
- Parents are encouraged where appropriate to bring advocates with them to meetings.
- Both parents in families who are divorced and separated are consulted in accordance with their divorce settlements and wishes.
- Staff are trained in equal opportunities.

- Services have an equal opportunities representative to monitor and improve practice.
- All pupils are treated with respect.
- Access to a broad, balanced curriculum and high expectations are part of the equality of opportunities we offer our pupils. We will ensure our curriculum is delivered in such a way that prevents discrimination, and the promotion of prejudicial stereotypes and promotes equality, diversity and tolerance.
- Schools place a high priority on the planning of transition and preparing pupils for adulthood.
- Pride, respect and involvement in pupils ethnic background, race and religion is practised. Dietary rules are followed, eating and dressing customs respected, a range of religious and cultural festivals are celebrated and family requests are followed.
- There is a Sex Education and Relationships programme and pupils are supported in the development of sexuality – See Sex Education & Relationships Policy SO-0133.
- We will use key data to understand the needs and characteristics of our school
- We will use key data, such as measures of wellbeing, to monitor the progress of pupils with protected characteristics
- We will place a high priority on promoting parent and local stakeholder engagement and community cohesion
- We will make any reasonable adjustments, and provide any auxiliary aids, necessary to ensure the inclusion of all pupils
- We will meet our duty to undertake accessibility planning for pupils with disabilities and ensure that an Accessibility Plan is implemented and reviewed where necessary.
- The school adheres to our SEND and Inclusion Policy containing further information addressing equal opportunities for pupils with SEND.
- RSE lessons will be taught in accordance with our Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- We will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate absence requests for treatment and support of trans\* pupils by external sources, e.g. charities such as Stonewall.

- Pupils have the right to dress in accordance with their true gender identity within the constraints of our dress code.
- We will ensure that there are suitable toilet and changing facilities for pupils to use.
- We will ensure that pupils are not singled out or treated less favourably because they are looked after, or have previously been looked after, by the state.
- A personal education plan will be created, and implemented, for all LAC and to ensure that their education and development needs are fully covered, including appropriate transition and catch-up support to ensure that they do not fall behind.
- We will provide a variety of educational and residential visits that expose pupils to a wide range of cultural experiences.
- Schools will support school councils to consider equality issues as an agenda item
- We will ensure that any medical conditions related to a pupil with a protected characteristic is fully supported in line with our Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.
- We will meet the Public Sector Equality duty by publishing an Equality Information and Objectives document. This will include:
  - Annual information to demonstrate how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, taking into account the specific circumstances surrounding pupils who have any of the protected characteristics outlined in [section 4](#).
  - Equality objectives (at least every four years) outlining how we may further equality in our school.
- Our Anti-bullying Policy will be used in conjunction with this policy in order to prevent, and effectively deal with, any discriminatory incidents.
- We will ensure the school is aware of, and participates in, relevant awareness days, such as Black History Month, World Disability Day, Transgender Day of Visibility, Transgender Day of Remembrance, PRIDE, and International Women's Day.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

### **The Board of Trustees' responsibilities**

- Ratify and regularly review this policy to ensure it conforms to relevant law and guidance

### **The Local Governing Body responsibilities**

- Ensure local procedures are in place to effectively implement this policy within the school
- To keep themselves informed through regular meetings with staff and visits to the school
- The Local Governing Body of the school is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy. Governors will therefore: monitor the progress of pupils from minority groups, comparing it to the progress made by other pupils in the school; monitor the staff appointment process so that no-one applying for a post at the school is discriminated against; take into serious consideration any complaints from pupils, parents, staff or visitors regarding equal opportunity; monitor the school's behaviour policy, and the numbers of exclusions, to make sure that pupils from minority groups are not unfairly treated and advise the board of any necessary amendments
- Appointing a governor who will review the effectiveness of implementation and report back to the LGB on a regular basis
- To ensure that any issue that may be perceived as a potential reputational risk to the trading name of the NAS or NASAT is referred to the board.

### **The Principals responsibilities**

- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of this policy, receive appropriate professional development and local procedures are followed
- The Principal is responsible for implementing this policy and promoting a culture of equal opportunities where all pupils and adults are treated with respect
- To take appropriate action in cases of harassment or discrimination
- Monitoring the progress and attainment of vulnerable groups of pupils (e.g. children and young people in care, children from minority ethnic /language or travelling communities and those with an additional need)
- The Principal will ensure that all appointments panels give due regard to this policy so that no-one suffers discrimination.
- The Principal will promote the principles of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum and in providing opportunities for training.
- The Principal will promote respect for other people in all aspects of school life; in assemblies, for example, respect for other people will be a regular theme as it will also be in displays around the school.

### **Responsibilities of School Staff**

- To enable and support pupils to recognise a range of feelings, both positive and negative and to develop their skills of emotional self-regulation
- Class teachers will recognise their own prejudices and ensure that all pupils are treated fairly and with respect. The school will not knowingly discriminate against any child/young person, parent or visitor and will actively seek to identify and remove indirect discrimination. Ignorance of what constitutes discrimination is not a defence against an allegation.
- When selecting classroom materials, teachers will strive to provide resources which give positive images and which challenge stereotypical images of minority groups.

- When designing schemes of work, teachers will pay cognisance to the equal opportunities policy, both in the choice of topics to study and in how to approach sensitive issues. For example, history topics should include examples of the significant contribution made by women; in geography, attempts should be made to counter stereotypical images of Africa and Asia and to show the true diversity of development in different parts of the world.
- To promote and model a culture of respect for all dealing appropriately with discrimination or bias.
- All teachers and support staff will challenge any incidents of prejudice or discrimination and draw them to the attention of the Principal.

### **Responsibilities of Parents and Carers**

- To work in close partnership with the staff and their child to promote a culture of respect for others

## 6. Evaluation of policy

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years for its effectiveness and to ensure it takes account of current legislation.

## 7. Equality impact assessment

In the design of this policy we have considered the complex inter-relating elements that impact on the effective support and identification of those with SEN. This policy seeks to promote the rights of people who have one or more of the protected characteristics (of which everyone does).

Through the implementation of this policy we seek to lessen some of the known inequalities that exist in society, including, but not limited to race, disability and gender, through carefully designed provision and support that affords opportunities for people with those protected characteristics to excel. This policy has been designed and consulted on with a stakeholder group internal to the NAS and NASAT, including school-based staff.

## 8. The legal framework

Equality Act 2010 Last updated June 2015

Public Sector Equality duty

Children Act 1989

SEN Code of Practice 2015

DfE Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children 2018

DfE Gender Separation in mixed schools 2018

DfE Equality Act 2010: advice for schools 2014

DfE Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools 2018

Race Relations Act 1976 & 2000 & 2003

Human Rights Act 1998

Data Protection Act 2018

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (amended 1986 & 2008)  
Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999  
Disability Discrimination Act 1995

## 9. Related policies

Anti-Bullying in schools and young people's services Policy SO-0193  
Local Equality Information and Objectives documents  
Accessibility in schools Policy SO-0103  
QOL Framework Policy SO-0109  
Safeguarding Children (Child Protection) Policy SO-0189  
Relationships and Sex Education Policy SO-133  
PSHE policy SO-0126  
Race Equality Policy SO-0238  
Online safety policy SO-0106  
Schools Local policies for Teaching and Learning, British Values  
Data protection policy IGP02  
Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy and Procedure HR 005  
HR -0021 Recruitment and Selection Procedure

## 10. Definitions

NAS – National Autistic Society  
NASAT - National Autistic Society Academy Trust free schools  
NAS (AT) refers to National Autistic Society Independent schools and National Autistic Society Academy Trust free schools.  
EHCP – Education, Health and Care plan  
LAC – Looked after children  
LGB – Local Governing Body  
DFE – Department for Education  
HR: Human Resources  
PSHE – personal, Social, Health and Economic Education.  
RSE – Relationships and Sex Education