



Wonder
Learning Partnership
Educate | Empower | Engage | Enrich

Equality Policy

This policy is applicable to the Wonder Learning Partnership (WLP)

Important: This document can only be considered valid when viewed on the Wonder Learning Partnership website. If this document has been printed or saved to another location, you must check that the version date on your copy matches that of the document online.

The Wonder Learning Partnership welcomes the support of the recognised trade unions in seeking to implement this policy in a fair and consistent manner and actively encourages employees who are members of a trade union to seek the support of their trade union representative at the earliest opportunity.

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Introduction

Wonder Learning Partnership (WLP) is committed to providing high-quality teaching and learning for our children. We recognise that by valuing and promoting equal opportunities in employment for all employees and job applicants and avoiding unlawful discrimination in employment and delivery of services, we will be able to deliver first class education and value the differences our workforce brings to WLP.

We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit. We also value diversity and recognise the varied contributions that a diverse workforce brings to an organisation; we are committed to drawing on different perspectives and experiences of individuals which will add value to what we do. We acknowledge intersectionality and the impact that a wide variety of differences will have on the individual and the workplace.

We will ensure that we do not discriminate against staff on the basis of:

- age,
- disability,
- gender reassignment,
- marital or civil partner status,
- pregnancy or maternity,
- race,
- religion or belief,

- sex or sexual orientation; or
- any combination of those listed above (the protected characteristics).

The principles of non-discrimination also apply to how we expect our staff to treat colleagues, children, parents and carers, visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former staff regardless of whether the legal protection of having a protected characteristic applies.

This policy complies with the requirements of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010. Under the general public sector equality duty of the Equality Act 2010, WLP must have due regard to and are committed to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- set diversity objectives
- identify a senior level champion for leading the diversity strategy
- secure top-level ownership and sponsorship
- develop and cascade a diversity vision statement
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The duty covers the protected characteristics of race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, gender definition, intersex, and non-binary. The first part of the duty - the duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation - also applies to the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership. As part of our duty, we publish on our website:

- Our equality objectives (at least every four years); and
- Information that demonstrates our compliance with this duty.
- We will also publish gender pay gap reporting in line with the regulations.

As part of the application of this policy, WLP may collect, process and store personal data and special categories of data in accordance with our data protection policy. We will comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation (being the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018) and any implementing laws, regulations, and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time, in relation to how we collect, hold, and share personal data.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Scope and Purpose

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades in WLP, including trustees, members, LRB members, Principals, senior leadership, employees, consultants, contractors,

trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers, casual workers, and agency staff (collectively referred to as employees in this policy).

This policy applies to all aspects of the employment relationship and covers job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, appraisals, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment. It also applies to former employees for example in the provision of employment references. This policy focuses on employment and does not cover the provision of services to our students.

The purpose of this policy is to set out our approach to equal opportunities, how we will tackle discrimination and how we will put our commitment into action and comply with the law, to ensure that equality and diversity is promoted in the workplace and our employees are not subject to and do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Trustees have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with equality legislation. Day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the Chief Operating Officer.

All senior leaders must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example, and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. Staff will not discriminate against a pupil, or prospective pupil, because of a characteristic which they are believed to have, even if the belief is mistaken.

All employees must be aware of this policy and have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and not to discriminate against or harass other people including employees, former employees and job applicants treating them with dignity at all times. This also applies on work-related trips or events including social events. They should also apply this to how they treat members of the public in the provision of services and should support WLP in meeting its commitment to provide equal opportunities for all and promoting diversity in the workplace.

If you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the school People, Culture and Estates Lead for further information.

Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the school People, Culture and Estates Lead.

Forms of Discrimination

Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics as set out above. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay. In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. It will only be in exceptional circumstances that this will apply in WLP.

Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but puts people with a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be objectively justified.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership are not protected directly under the harassment provisions. However, pregnancy and maternity harassment would amount to harassment related to sex, and harassment related to civil partnership would amount to harassment related to sexual orientation. Harassment is dealt with further in our Grievance Policy and Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment or supported someone else's complaint. This includes where someone mistakenly believes that the victim has complained, given information or supported someone else's complaint.

Discrimination by association is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by perception is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that a person has a particular protected characteristic irrespective of whether they do have that protected characteristic (this does not include marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity).

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity), by third parties such as parents and carers, clients, or customers.

Part-time and fixed-term staff should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate) unless different treatment is justified.

Applying our policy to recruitment and selection

We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics. When recruiting or on promotion, we will aim to take steps to improve the diversity of our workforce and provide equality of opportunity. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant skills and abilities. All applicants will be provided on request with a copy of our Recruitment Privacy Notice which sets out how we will gather, process, and hold personal data of individuals during the recruitment process. Our recruitment processes are set out in our Recruitment and Selection Policy.

Job selection criteria as set out in the person specification will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job. Short listing of applicants should be done by more than one person wherever possible and will be carried out objectively against the requirements of the job.

Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying.

We will take reasonable steps, where appropriate depending on the situation, to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market. This policy will be made available to applicants upon request and can also be found on our website to download.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, other than where it is necessary to:

- establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments)
- establish if any reasonable adjustments need to be made to enable an applicant to have a fair interview or assessment.
- carry out equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

Job offers will be conditional upon a satisfactory medical check in accordance with our obligation under Keeping Children Safe in Education, where a school must verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities in accordance with the Education (Health Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

Applicants will not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy or gender identity or history. Applicants will not be asked about matters which may suggest an intention to discriminate on the grounds of a protected characteristic. Applicants will be asked to clarify which pronoun they would prefer to be referred to.

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance, name, or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original specified documents before employment starts to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the People and Estate Lead.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in WLP, we monitor diversity data as part of the recruitment process. Provision of this information is voluntary, and it will not adversely affect an individual's success at recruitment, or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before short listing and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

Application of the Policy

Recruitment and Selection

- Recruitment advertising will encourage applications from all sectors of the community reflecting the Trust's commitment to equality and diversity.
- Recruitment advertising will appear in publications appropriate to the audience capable of producing the best candidates.
- Job descriptions, person specifications and recruitment advertisements will be written based on the essential and justifiable requirements of the position.
- Shortlisting, appointment, and rejection decisions will be transparent and justifiable and will be supported by written comments.

Staff Development

- All staff will have equal access to induction, personal and career development opportunities, and facilities.

Appraisal

- Appraisal procedures will be clear and transparent and will be applied fairly across all staff.
- Pay decisions will be in line with the Pay Policy and decisions made will be applied fairly across all staff including those on maternity leave.

Disciplinary and Grievance

- Disciplinary and grievance procedures will be applied fairly and transparently for all staff.
- Allegations of discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedures for staff.

Complaints

- Any allegations of harassment, discrimination, bullying or victimisation will be taken very seriously by the Trust. Staff who make a complaint of discrimination have the right to do so without fear of victimisation and the Trust will make every effort to ensure victimisation does not occur and that complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly.
- Where an individual believes that they have been treated unfairly in accordance with this Policy, they have the right of complaint through the appropriate procedures:
 - Where an individual employed by the Trust feels they have been discriminated against by an employee manager, Local Review Board Member of the Academy or Trustee, they should refer to the Grievance Policy.
 - Where the Trust does not employ an individual and they feel that they have been discriminated against by an employee, manager or Local Review Board Member of the Academy or Trustee, they should refer to the Trust's Complaints Policy. In both cases, advice should be sought from the school People, Culture and Estates Lead.

Monitoring

We will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the policy by consulting with senior leaders in each Academy and Central Services on a regular basis. Issues arising from regular reporting or audits will also help inform this process as will any ad hoc concerns raised by staff, students, or the community.

We will monitor the relevant legislation, guidelines, and information forthcoming from the relevant statutory bodies for any recommendation or changes.

The Executive will advise the the Trust Board of any changes that are needed, and a proposal will be submitted to the Trust Board within an appropriate timescale. There will be a full review of the policy prior to the stated review date where recommendations will be made for consideration by the PPPC.