



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION POLICY

Date: January 2024

Review Date: September 2025

1. Aims of the Equality Policy

Highfield Middle School is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive, caring and supportive environment, which is committed to the promotion of genuine equal opportunities for all. We recognise that every member of the school is regarded as of equal worth and importance, irrespective of their faith, culture, class, race, gender, sexuality and/or disability.

We recognise that the public sector equality duty has three aims and they are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who have a shared characteristic and those who do not.

Highfield Middle School will annually review how well we achieve these aims with regard to the protected groups under the Equality Act (2010):

- race
- disability
- gender / gender re-assignment
- age
- pregnancy and maternity
- marital status
- religion and belief
- sexual orientation

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2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements under the following legislation:

- The Equality Act 2010, which introduced the public sector equality duty and protects people from discrimination.
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, which require schools to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the public sector equality duty and to publish equality objectives.
- This document is also based on Department for Education (DfE) guidance: The Equality Act 2010 and schools.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board at Highfield Middle School will:

- Ensure that the equality information and ethos as set out in this policy are published and communicated throughout the school, including to staff, pupils and parents, and that they are reviewed and updated at least once every four years.
- Delegate responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives on a daily basis to the headteacher.

Highfield Middle School's equality governor will:

- Meet with the designated member of staff for equality annually, and other relevant staff members, to discuss any issues and how these are being addressed. This discussion should then inform the writing of the annual equality report.
- Ensure they're familiar with all relevant legislation and the contents of this document.
- Attend any appropriate equality and diversity training.
- Report back to the full governing body regarding any issues.

The headteacher of Highfield Middle School will:

- Promote knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives amongst staff and pupils.
- Monitor success in achieving the objectives and report back to governors.
- Ensure that the annual equality report is produced by the designated member of staff.

The designated member of staff for equality will:

- Support the headteacher in promoting knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives amongst staff and pupils.

- Meet with the equality link governor annually to raise and discuss any issues. This discussion should then inform the writing of the annual equality report.
- Support the headteacher in identifying any staff training needs, and deliver training as necessary. All school staff are expected to have regard to this document and to work to achieve the objectives as set out in section 10.

4. Eliminating discrimination

Highfield Middle School is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and complies with non-discrimination provisions. Where relevant, our policies include reference to the importance of avoiding discrimination and other prohibited conduct. New staff receive training on the Equality Act as part of their induction, and all staff receive refresher training and are made aware of this policy. Highfield Middle School has a designated member of staff for monitoring equality issues, and an equality link governor. They will liaise regarding any issues and make senior leaders and governors aware of these as appropriate.

5. Advancing equality of opportunity

As set out in the DfE guidance on the Equality Act, Highfield Middle School aims to advance equality of opportunity by:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages which are connected to a particular characteristic people may have (e.g. pupils with disabilities, pupils who are being subjected to homophobic bullying or pupils who are subjected to racist bullying because of their race, ethnicity, culture or appearance).
- Taking steps to meet the particular needs of people who have a particular characteristic (e.g. enabling Muslim pupils to pray at prescribed times).
- Encouraging people who have a particular characteristic to participate fully in any activities (e.g. encouraging all pupils to be involved in the full range of school clubs).

In fulfilling this aspect of the duty, Highfield Middle School will:

- Publish attainment data in an equality report each academic year showing how pupils with different characteristics are performing.
- Analyse the above data to determine strengths and areas for improvement, implement actions in response and publish this information.
- Make evidence available identifying improvements for specific groups (e.g. declines in incidents of homophobic or transphobic bullying).
- Publish further data about any issues associated with particular protected characteristics, identifying any issues which could affect our own pupils.

6. Fostering good relations

Highfield Middle School aims to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it by:

- Promoting tolerance, friendship and understanding of a range of religions and cultures through different aspects of our curriculum. This includes teaching in RE, Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, but also activities in other curriculum areas.

Highfield Middle School also promotes British Values by:

- Holding assemblies which focus on British Values, Protected Characteristics and the types of Discrimination that people may experience. External speakers may be invited to contribute and some assemblies may be led by our E-Stars.
- Working with our local community. This includes inviting adults from our local church to lead assemblies and visiting the Church at certain times of the year.
- Organising school trips and activities based around the local community.
- Enhancing learning in RE lessons by arranging for pupils to visit places of worship in the local or wider community.
- Encouraging and implementing initiatives to deal with tensions between different groups of pupils within the school.
- Ensuring that pupils from different backgrounds and all year groups, are represented on school council.
- Encouraging all pupils to participate in school activities such as sports clubs.

7. Equality considerations in decision-making

The school ensures it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made. The school always considers the impact of significant decisions on particular groups e.g. when a school trip or activity is being planned.

Examples of what teachers should consider when planning a trip include:

- Do trips cut across any religious holidays?
- Is the venue accessible to pupils with disabilities?
- Do venues have equivalent facilities for boys and girls?
- Is any content whilst on a trip likely to upset any children from a particular group?

8. The Role of Highfield Middle School in promoting community cohesion

As economic change, regeneration, migration and other factors continue to alter the shape of our local communities and neighbourhoods, the role of Highfield Middle School is more important than ever. All research and guidance on community cohesion recognises the central role of schools in breaking down barriers between young people; developing their sense of belonging; and building their understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Schools also play a vital part in promoting cohesion in the wider community.

From a school perspective, the term community has a number of dimensions including:

- The school community
- The community in which the school is located
- The community of Britain
- The global community

Highfield Middle School can contribute to community cohesion in the following ways:

- through our ethos and curriculum (e.g. British Values and PSHE)
- promoting shared values and a common sense of identity
- highlighting our commitment to supporting diversity and equality

- through our engagement with parents, the wider community and other schools

9. Equality Self Evaluation for Highfield Middle School

At Highfield Middle School, we recognise that under the equality legislation our duties when carrying out our functions are to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- Promote positive attitudes
- Encourage participation in public life
- Take steps to take into account the specific needs of those covered under the equality duties

Gathering Information

At Highfield Middle School collection of information is crucial to setting our priorities and monitoring our outcomes and is therefore a requirement of the different equality duties. The school will collect information on those strands of equality where it is a statutory requirement to do so. We will consider the need to collect information on other equality strands as part of our self-evaluation in relation to needs, entitlements and outcomes for pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. This information will tell us whether our policies and practices are affecting some groups differently or adversely by preventing them from participating/achieving well in school life.

To meet the general duties of the equality standards we will:

- Investigate the processes that have led to differences between diverse groups.
- Consider how to remove any barriers.
- Where necessary, revise and review our policies/practices and action plan.
- Establish monitoring systems for areas where information does not currently exist.

Pupil Data

Highfield Middle School collects data on the achievements of all pupils. This generic information gathering will be disaggregated for pupils from diverse groups to reveal if current policies and practices are differentially affecting any group of pupils' achievements and attainments.

We will monitor, for example:

- Admission and Transfer Procedures
- Pupil attainment and progress
- Attendance
- Access to the environment, including access to equipment
- Access to the curriculum, teaching and learning
- Access to written communication
- Personal development and pastoral care
- School values
- Behaviour, discipline and exclusion
- Harassment

- Bullying (including racist and homophobic bullying)
- PSHE
- Health, sport and obesity

Highfield Middle School also gathers information on 'opportunities' and 'achievements' of pupils from diverse groups.

Possible examples include:

- which pupils are in positions of responsibility
- satisfaction and enjoyment levels across a range of school activities
- aspirations and ambitions of pupils for the future
- access to school trips
- involvement in after school clubs and activities
- opportunities for enrichment activities (both in / out of school)

Employee Data

Highfield Middle School gathers the following information annually in relation to all employees, as part of Northumberland's school workforce diversity monitoring process:

- staff in post
- applicants for employment, training and promotion

Parent Data

Under the requirements of the general duties, it is useful for us to collect detailed information on parents of children at Highfield Middle School. In doing this, we would be in a better position to show how we are promoting equality for all parents who are part of the school community.

We will do this by monitoring, by diverse group, for example:

- attendance at parents evenings
- membership of Highfield Middle School governing body
- access to information, services and resources for parents and guardians
- level of response to information requested by the school (this could flag up language or English problems.)

How we use the data we collect

At Highfield Middle School we will analyse the data to see if there are any patterns of inequality and will take whatever steps are needed to remove barriers, value diversity, promote awareness and promote equal opportunities/human rights, as highlighted in our equality self-evaluation.

This ensures that we:

- highlight any differences between those from different backgrounds
- ask why these differences exist, and test the explanations given
- review how effective the current targets and objectives are
- decide what further action may be needed to meet the general duties and to improve the performance of the different equality groups

10. Equality objectives

Below are a list of objectives identified at the time of writing this report. The progress being made in meeting these objectives will be identified in the annual equality report. If any additional objectives are needed these will be added to the annual report and reported on in subsequent years. All objectives will be monitored by the Head Teacher and key staff alongside the school governing body.

Objective 1: To ensure that staff and governors are aware of current legislation surrounding equality and diversity and understand the school's responsibility.

How we intend to address this:

- Policy shared with all staff
- Senior Leaders aware of relevant legislation
- Annual monitoring of outcomes by equality governor

Objective 2: To promote understanding, awareness and tolerance of different cultures and beliefs, between different groups within our school and the wider community.

How we intend to address this:

- Through whole school, key stage and year group assemblies
- Via our PSHE curriculum
- During pastoral sessions and activities
- By ensuring that pupils do not use homophobic or racist language and that any incidents are dealt with immediately

Objective 3: To ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged by poverty or financial hardship, and that any such pupils receive the same opportunities within school.

How we intend to address this:

- Continue to provide a range of extra-curricular activities which are accessible to all pupils
- Monitor attendance at these clubs and compare different groups of children (e.g. boys / girls, FSM/non FSM)
- A discount is automatically applied to all residential visits for pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding
- Financial contributions towards any curriculum-linked visits or activities are clearly identified as voluntary

Objective 4: To ensure that all pupils have access to a healthy breakfast at the start of the day.

How we intend to address this:

- Continue to provide a fully-funded breakfast club which is accessible to all pupils who are eligible for pupil premium
- Extend the breakfast club offer to individual pupils who have been identified as not having access to breakfast before they arrive at school

Objective 5: To promote a whole school approach towards mental health awareness and develop appropriate interventions where necessary.

How we intend to address this:

- A member of SLT has been appointed as senior mental health lead and is undertaking the training
- All year groups involved in assemblies throughout the year to promote the maintenance and development of good mental health and wellbeing.
- KS2 involved in a scheme called 'Melva': a drama-based project aimed at identifying worries and anxieties and developing strategies to manage these. Melva activities delivered to whole classes in KS2 and can also be tailored for 1:1 or small group delivery. Sessions delivered every Tuesday - 'Check-in Tuesday' - to facilitate the discussion of issues that may be concerning pupils and celebrates good mental health.
- KS3 engage in Wellbeing Wednesday. Pupils are taught about mental health issues and develop ways to manage and reduce their impact. These are delivered in Pastoral sessions and facilitate discussion and address issues that may be affecting pupils through whole-class and 1:1 conversations with form teachers.
- Learning mentors work with referred pupils to support their wellbeing. The weekly sessions are delivered in 6 week blocks and address: Emotional Literacy; Anxiety; Bereavement; Resilience and Self Esteem; and Social Development.
- 'Feel Good Friday' allows selected pupils from each year group to spend a lesson in the bungalow. This initiative is used as an extra layer of support for pupils who are working through issues or as a reward for pupils that have gone over and above what they are expected to contribute to lessons. This session is a positive end to the week which in turn encourages a positive return to school the following Monday.
- 'The Bungalow' provides a nurture space for vulnerable pupils away from the main school building. This facility is led by the Learning Mentors and has space for small group work and extra-curricular activities such as baking, art and mindfulness. It has an enclosed garden to the rear. At lunchtime, pupils who find the dinner hall environment too noisy or busy (often due to sensory needs) are able to eat their lunch in a quiet space. Social activities during this time are supported by the Learning Mentors and our Year 8 Peer Mentors.
- 'The Bungalow' is also used as a place to support pupils experiencing school-based anxiety or persistent absence and help them re-integrate back into school. By offering a 'soft-start' to the day, promoting resilience and equipping them with coping strategies, they are supported to improve their attendance day by day.

Objective 6: Actively close gaps in attainment and achievement between students for all groups of students; especially students eligible for Pupil Premium, students with special educational needs and disabilities and looked after children.

How we intend to address this:

- Rigorously monitor the progress of all groups, to clearly identify any underachievement in performance and adjust provision to support progress.

- Attendance is monitored and where there are any concerns, pupils are closely monitored by the attendance officer, heads of year, SENCo and deputy headteacher.
- When needed, the Education Welfare Officer will work with families to support them to improve attendance and access additional support.

Objective 7: Continue to improve facilities and accessibility across the school site for students, staff and visitors with disabilities.

How we intend to address this:

- Undertake adaptations or adjustments needed to ensure the premises are accessible
- Communicate openly about current and future student needs with feeder schools, health and social care professionals
- Collect feedback from students, staff and visitors

Objective 7: To continuously review and revise the curriculum so that it represents a diverse culture and society and encourages tolerance and respect.

How we intend to address this:

- At the fore of our whole school curriculum intent we state that "*all individuals are respected and valued, regardless of ability, background or needs ... We intend to inspire our pupils through a broad, rich, diverse and inclusive curriculum ...*"
- This has been identified as a key School Improvement Priority, with subject leaders expected to deliberately and carefully consider the intent for their curriculum with specific consideration given to these key values and a departmental action plan produced to address them.
- Work has been done by senior leaders to audit the personal development curriculum and to identify any gaps to be addressed through the Citizenship curriculum, assemblies and pastoral sessions.

11. Monitoring arrangements

- The Headteacher will update the equality report annually and publish it on the school website
- This document will be reviewed by the named governor and Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher at least every 4 years
- This document will be approved by governing body.