



Review of equality objectives

February 2024

Introduction

Our equality objectives have been in place since April 2021, and are published on our Trust's website as part of our commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Under the PSED we are required to review our equality objectives at least every four years, and to report on progress towards them annually. This is our latest report on progress.

We are content that our objectives remain 'fit for purpose', although things have progressed in relation to gender/ethnicity pay gap reporting and use of 'blind shortlisting', which is covered in the update narrative. As these objectives were originally published in April 2021, a more substantive review will take place during the next 12 month period.

Following publication of the equality objectives, a comprehensive action plan was put in place which has now placed many things into 'business as usual' such as:

- explicit reference to equality & diversity in policies
- publication of academy equality objectives and annual review of progress
- a year-long calendar celebrating diversity
- Equality Link Governors' network

Review of objectives

Objective 1: to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into the curriculum and teaching & learning practices

Objective

The Trust and its academies will work towards a curriculum and teaching & learning practices which:

- are inclusive - all pupils and staff are welcomed and valued
- show respect for and appreciation of one another as individuals
- prepare pupils for life in a diverse society by encouraging respect for linguistic, cultural and religious diversity that exists in local communities and the wider world
- develop personal and cultural identity in all pupils
- widen educational and personal horizons of all pupils if limited by factors that compromise equality
- are proactive in tackling discrimination
- promote benefits of diversity

We will work with our sponsor, the Co-op, to develop a new curriculum on anti-racism so that the next generation knows what it means to be anti-racist.

Review

We have a clear intent to make long-term sustainable changes, ensuring the curriculum is truly inclusive; this was a key focus during the 2022/23 academic year. We continue to partner with the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality (CRED) at Leeds Beckett University, and all of our academies are working towards their Anti Racist Schools Award (funded by the Co-op). This is a 2 year programme and by March 2024 all of our academies will have started the programme. Further information is at Annex 1.

Following students from two of our schools participating in a powerful interactive learning event relating to understanding of the damaging and fatal outcomes of racism, we have commissioned the provider to run a bespoke event for all of our secondary academies, as part of the art curriculum for year 9 students this year.

Objective 2: to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into the wider organisation

Objective

The Trust and its academies will work towards this objective by:

- a. each academy monitoring and analysing pupil achievement and progress by ethnicity, gender and disability, and acting on any trends or patterns in this data which identify the need for additional support for pupils with the aim of narrowing the gap for equality groups.
- b. each academy publishing a statement setting out the actions they intend taking to advance equality, diversity & inclusion during the forthcoming academic year (or from their date of joining the Trust). A report will be provided by the Headteacher / Principal, on request annually, to enable Trust-wide reporting.
- c. ensuring, as we adopt a Trust-wide HR information system, that this incorporates the ability to provide robust reporting on and monitoring of equalities data.
- d. further developing reporting on our gender pay gap and – in future – other pay gaps (e.g. ethnicity), and taking positive action to reduce these gaps where possible.
- e. taking steps to address the risk of bias and discriminatory behaviour, initially by raising awareness of this facet of equality and diversity through leadership training; and ensuring that 'blind recruitment' takes place where possible.
- f. creating and promoting opportunities for staff voice, and debate & dialogue, within the Trust around these key issues.

Review

In January 2023, the Department for Education, working with the Cabinet Office's Equality Hub, commissioned Isos Partnership to undertake exploratory research into how academy trusts and schools have improved the achievement of, and closed achievement gaps between, pupils from different ethnic groups. The research took place during the spring term and the first half of the summer term 2023, and involved discussions with trust and school leaders within nine academy trusts (including Co-op Academies Trust), one maintained school and national education sector organisations. The report can be read [here](#).

In addition to academy level monitoring and analysis (a) we have a comprehensive trust-wide data dashboard which gives an overview of achievement and progress, and also other indicators such as student attendance and exclusions. This is continually being improved to include more information.

We have a Trust-wide SEND approach, which includes both special and mainstream schools, and an active network of SENDCos. Independent reviews of practice in each school have been carried out, and are being repeated on a biennial basis, to help identify further improvements in practice to advance the education of students with special educational needs & disabilities.

Academies publish their own Equality Statements / Objectives, and are asked to review (& update if necessary) on an annual basis, along with progress during the 2022/23 academic year (b). Links to the reports on individual academy websites are at Annex 2.

Individual academies set objectives and carry out actions based on their local circumstances, staff and student profile, and the community they are based within. One action of note is Co-op Academy Leeds' link with Mission 44 (a charity set up by Sir Lewis Hamilton). The academy was successful in a bid of £450,000 for promoting inclusion and reducing exclusion in students, particularly the Roma community.

After our initial push to input ethnicity data, there have been some challenges with keeping it up-to-date as new staff and academies join our Trust (c). We had hoped to roll out Employee Self Service, so that colleagues could review and complete / update all of their equalities data, however, this has not happened to date due to circumstances outside our control.

In 2023 we were able to report our ethnicity pay gap (d) for the second time, alongside our gender pay gap. This showed a narrowing of the pay gap, however, it is too soon to say whether this is a trend. A key action we are taking is to establish a Diverse Leaders Programme, which will launch for the first time in March 2024. This is 'positive action' to encourage and develop middle and senior leaders from diverse backgrounds, with the aspiration of increasing the diversity in the upper quartile.

In parallel with actions around our staff, in terms of leadership at Trust Board, Academy Governing Councils, and Senior Trust Leaders (EHTs/HTs) we continue to better reflect the diversity of our communities, with more to do - and we're about to start work with Diverse Educators establishing a course for this very purpose.

From the start in April 2021 we continually rolled out training across the Trust (e), last year's Governor Conference in Spring 2023 was on EDI and was an excellent event to raise the profile of this crucial topic again. And in Summer 2023 we also held a Teaching and Learning Conference based on EDI. All our Subject Directors have had training, so development of curriculum in our schools in this area is making good progress.

Blind shortlisting currently takes place, but will need to be reviewed as we transition to using a different online application process.

Annex1 - Development of an Anti Racist Curriculum

The journey so far

In partnership with the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality (CRED) at Leeds Beckett University, Trust colleagues and Trust Board & Governors have attended a series of training sessions: Let's Talk About Race, Developing an Anti-Racist Policy Masterclass, Racial Literacy and Race Conversations. These workshops have helped staff gain confidence and vocabulary around anti racism.

During the 2022/23 academie year, academies worked towards reviewing and decolonising the curriculum, supported by Subject and Regional Directors, aiming to design and implement a fully inclusive curriculum at each academy.

What's next?

All academies will be working towards the Anti Racist School Award delivered by Leeds Beckett CRED and funded by the Co-op.

By working towards this award, academies will be able to maintain the momentum achieved to date, as well as ensuring the embedding of the curriculum and overall culture with the academy.

The Anti-Racist School Award provides an evidence-based framework to support academies on this continued journey. The Award framework focuses on the following areas:

- Governance, Leadership & Management
- School Environment
- Professional Learning & Development
- Hidden Curriculum
- Pedagogy & Curriculum
- Parents/Carers & Community Partnerships

The first group of academies commence this during Summer 2023, with a second group commencing during Autumn 2023, and the final group during Spring Term 2024. Each academy will have up to 2 years to achieve the award, following the initial coaching call and the status lasts for 3 years from completion.

Annex 2 - Academy E&D objectives & reviews

Please see links below to information published on each individual academy's website. This does not include schools which have joined our Trust since September 2023.

Bebington	New Islington
Beckfield	Nightingale
Belle Vue	North Manchester
Broadhurst	Oakwood
Brownhill	Parkland
Clarice Cliff	Portland
Connell	Priesthorpe
Delius	Princeville
Failsworth	Smithies Moor
Friarswood	Southfield
Glebe	Stoke
Grange	Swinton
Hillside	Walkden
Leeds	Woodlands
Manchester	Woodslee