



REACHING OUTCOMES USING TAILORED EDUCATION & SKILLS

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY 2025-26

Approved by:	Mr Daniel Luford (Director)	Date: 01/04/23	
	Mr Nick Lyons (Director)		
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Policy Statement

Routes Learning is committed to promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and respect for all young people, staff, parents, carers, visitors and other members of our community.

We believe that every child and young person has the right to access education in an environment where they are valued, respected and treated fairly, regardless of their background, identity, circumstances or individual needs.

As an Alternative Education Provision, we recognise that many of the young people who attend our provision may have experienced barriers to education, including exclusion, disrupted education, disadvantages, SEND, social and emotional difficulties, trauma or other challenging circumstances.

We therefore have a particular responsibility to ensure that our provision is welcoming, inclusive and responsive to individual needs. We aim to remove unnecessary barriers to learning and ensure that every young person can achieve, participate and develop.

We will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, bullying or prejudice in any form.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the provision.
- Ensure that all young people are treated fairly, respectfully and with dignity.
- Provide an environment that is free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation.
- Identify and remove barriers that may prevent young people from accessing education or participating fully in provision life.
- Promote positive attitudes towards diversity and differences.
- Recognise and celebrate the different backgrounds, experiences, cultures and identities within our community.
- Ensure that reasonable adjustments and appropriate support are provided where required.
- Ensure that recruitment, employment and professional development practices are fair and non-discriminatory.
- Promote equality of opportunity for all young people and staff.
- Ensure that concerns relating to discrimination are taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy has regard to relevant UK legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Equality Act 2010.
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0–25 years.
- Education Act 2011.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).
- School and alternative provision safeguarding requirements.
- Public Sector Equality Duty, where applicable to the status of the provision.

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals from discrimination based on nine protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion or belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual orientation

Where relevant, Routes Learning will consider these characteristics when developing policies, procedures, curriculum content, staffing arrangements and individual support.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All young people.
- All staff.
- Parents and carers.
- Visitors and contractors.
- Any other person working with or representing Routes Learning.

All members of Routes Learning community are expected to uphold the principles of equality, diversity and respect.

Principles of Equality and Inclusion

Routes Learning is committed to the following principles:

Equality of opportunity

Every young person should have meaningful access to education and the opportunity to make progress, regardless of their individual circumstances.

Equality does not necessarily mean treating everyone identically. We recognise that young people may require different levels or types of support to achieve equitable outcomes.

Respect and dignity

All members of our community will be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.

We expect young people and adults to demonstrate respect towards people who may have different backgrounds, beliefs, cultures, identities, abilities or experiences.

Individual needs

We recognise that young people attending Alternative Provision may have significantly different educational, social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Individual differences will be considered when planning education, support, behaviour management, communication and reasonable adjustments.

Inclusion

We will seek to ensure that young people are able to participate in learning and the wider life of the provision wherever reasonably possible.

Where barriers are identified, appropriate steps will be taken to reduce or remove them.

Positive relationships

We promote positive relationships between young people, staff, families and professionals.

Staff will model respectful language, behaviour and attitudes and will challenge discriminatory or prejudicial behaviour appropriately.

Discrimination

Discrimination will not be tolerated.

Discrimination may include:

- Direct discrimination.
- Indirect discrimination.
- Discrimination arises from disability.
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments.

- Harassment.
- Victimisation.
- Bullying motivated by prejudice or discrimination.

Discrimination may occur because of a person's own characteristics or because they are perceived to have a particular characteristic, or because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic.

All allegations or concerns will be taken seriously and investigated in accordance with the provision's relevant policies and procedures.

Disability and SEND

We recognise our responsibilities towards young people and staff with disabilities and special educational needs.

Routes Learning will:

- Make reasonable adjustments where required.
- Consider accessibility when planning activities and learning.
- Adapt teaching and communication approaches to meet individual needs.
- Consider sensory, physical, communication and environmental needs.
- Work with parents, carers, schools and relevant professionals where appropriate.
- Consider information contained within Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and other relevant assessments.
- Avoid making assumptions about what a young person can or cannot achieve because of a disability or SEND need.
- Promote independence and participation wherever appropriate.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered on an individual basis and in accordance with legal requirements.

Race, Culture and Ethnicity

We value the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of our community.

Routes Learning will:

- Challenge racist language, behaviour and attitudes.
- Promote understanding and respect between different cultures and communities.
- Ensure curriculum and learning opportunities are appropriately inclusive.
- Recognise and value cultural differences.
- Avoid stereotyping or making assumptions about individuals based on race, ethnicity or cultural background.

Racist incidents will be recorded and addressed appropriately.

Religion and Belief

We respect the right of individuals to hold different religious beliefs, philosophical beliefs or no religious belief.

We will:

- Treat young people and staff fairly regardless of religion or belief.
- Challenge religious discrimination and intolerance.
- Avoid unnecessary barriers to reasonable religious observance.
- Encourage respectful discussion about different beliefs.
- Ensure that differing beliefs do not become a reason for bullying, harassment or exclusion.

Freedom of belief does not permit behaviour that harms, intimidates or discriminates against others.

Sex and Gender Equality

Routes Learning is committed to ensuring equality between individuals regardless of sex.

We will:

- Provide equal opportunities to access education and activities.
- Challenge sexist language, stereotypes and behaviour.
- Ensure that expectations of behaviour and achievement are applied fairly.
- Avoid unnecessary assumptions about young peoples based on sex.
- Promote respectful relationships between all young people.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment

We are committed to ensuring that no young people, member of staff or other members of our community experiences discrimination, harassment or bullying because of sexual orientation or gender reassignment.

Any discriminatory language or behaviour will be challenged and dealt with appropriately.

Staff will maintain professionalism, respect confidentiality and follow safeguarding procedures where concerns about a young person's welfare arise.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Routes Learning will ensure that pregnancy and maternity are not used as grounds for discrimination.

Where relevant, reasonable steps will be taken to support young people or staff affected by pregnancy or maternity and to ensure continued access to education or employment.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Routes Learning will not discriminate against staff or other adults on the basis of marriage or civil partnership.

Employment decisions will be based on appropriate professional criteria and not on protected characteristics.

Age

Routes Learning recognises that age is a protected characteristic in relation to employment.

Employment decisions will not be based unfairly on age.

In relation to young people, individual developmental stage, maturity and educational needs will be considered when planning appropriate support and learning.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying, harassment and discriminatory behaviour are unacceptable.

This includes behaviour relating to:

- Race or ethnicity.
- Religion or belief.
- Disability or SEND.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.
- Gender reassignment.
- Appearance or personal characteristics.
- Family circumstances.
- Socio-economic background.
- Any other characteristic or difference used to target an individual.

Bullying may occur face-to-face or through digital technology, social media or other forms of communication.

Incidents will be addressed in accordance with the provision's Behaviour, Anti-Bullying and Safeguarding procedures.

Language and Communication

Staff will use language that is respectful, professional and appropriate to the individual young people.

We recognise that young people may communicate in different ways because of SEND, developmental needs, language differences or other circumstances.

Staff will adapt communication approaches where necessary and will avoid language that is degrading, stereotypical or discriminatory.

Curriculum and Learning

The curriculum will provide appropriate opportunities to develop young people's understanding of:

- Equality.
- Diversity.
- Respect.
- Rights and responsibilities.
- Different cultures and communities.
- Democracy and participation.
- Tolerance and understanding.
- Positive relationships.

Learning materials will be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate, respectful and do not unnecessarily reinforce stereotypes or prejudice.

Where appropriate, curriculum content will reflect the experiences and backgrounds of the young people's attending Routes Learning.

Alternative Provision and Individualised Support

We recognise that equality in Alternative Provision requires an individualised approach.

Young people may require different approaches to:

- Attendance and engagement.
- Learning activities.
- Communication.
- Behaviour support.
- Emotional regulation.

- Sensory needs.
- Curriculum access.
- Assessment.
- Reintegration or transition.

Such differences will not automatically constitute unequal treatment. Where adjustments are necessary to provide equitable access to education, they will be considered positively and proportionately.

Routes Learning will work closely with commissioning schools, parents/carers and relevant professionals to identify barriers and develop appropriate support.

Behaviour and Equality

Our behaviour expectations apply consistently to all young people.

However, we recognise that individual young people may have SEND, communication difficulties, emotional needs or other circumstances that affect their presentation and behaviour.

Staff will therefore consider relevant individual needs when responding to behaviour while maintaining appropriate boundaries and expectations.

Discriminatory or prejudicial behaviour will be challenged regardless of the young people's circumstances.

Recruitment and Employment

Routes Learning is committed to fair and transparent recruitment and employment practices.

We will:

- Recruit based on suitability, qualifications, experience and professional competence.
- Avoid discriminatory recruitment practices.
- Provide appropriate opportunities for professional development.
- Ensure that staff are treated fairly.
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees where appropriate.
- Address discriminatory behaviour within the workplace.

All staff are expected to contribute positively to an inclusive working environment.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for promoting equality and diversity.

Staff should:

- Model respectful and inclusive behaviour.
- Challenge discriminatory language and behaviour.
- Report concerns appropriately.
- Treat young people as individuals.
- Avoid stereotyping.
- Consider individual needs when planning and delivering support.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Follow safeguarding procedures where discrimination or prejudice may present a safeguarding concern.
- Promote positive relationships between young people.

Staff should never ignore discriminatory behaviour on the assumption that it is minor or harmless.

Leadership Responsibilities

Directors are responsible for ensuring that:

- This policy is implemented effectively.
- Staff understand their responsibilities.
- Equality and diversity are embedded within the provision.
- Discrimination and bullying are addressed promptly.
- Reasonable adjustments are considered.
- Relevant incidents are recorded and monitored.
- Staff receive appropriate training.
- Equality considerations inform decision-making.
- The policy is reviewed regularly.

Young people Responsibilities

Young people are expected to:

- Treat others with respect.
- Avoid discriminatory, threatening or abusive behaviour.
- Listen to and respect different viewpoints.
- Follow the provision's behaviour expectations.
- Report concerns about discrimination or bullying to a trusted adult.
- Contribute towards a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Young people will be supported to understand these responsibilities in an age- and developmentally appropriate manner.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to work in partnership with Routes Learning to promote equality, inclusion and positive relationships.

Concerns relating to discrimination should be raised with the appropriate member of staff in accordance with the provision's complaints procedure.

Routes Learning will seek to resolve concerns fairly, professionally and promptly.

Responding to Discriminatory Incidents

Where an allegation or incident of discrimination occurs, Routes Learning will:

- Ensure the immediate safety and welfare of those involved.
- Establish the relevant facts.
- Listen to the individuals involved.
- Record the incident appropriately.
- Consider whether the incident represents a safeguarding concern.
- Inform parents/carers or other professionals where appropriate.
- Take proportionate action in accordance with relevant policies.
- Provide appropriate support to those affected.
- Monitor the situation where necessary.
- Review whether further preventative action or education is required.

Serious incidents will be escalated to the appropriate senior leader and, where required, external agencies.

Safeguarding

Equality and diversity are closely linked to safeguarding.

Staff must remain alert to situations where prejudice, discrimination, harassment, exploitation or bullying may place young people at risk of harm.

Where an equality-related concern may also represent a safeguarding concern, Routes Learning's safeguarding procedures will take priority.

All staff must follow the requirements set out in Routes Learning's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Routes Learning will monitor equality and diversity through:

- Behaviour and incident records.
- Attendance and engagement information.
- Safeguarding records.
- Young people's voice.
- Parent/carer feedback.
- Staff feedback.
- Complaints and concerns.
- Reviews of curriculum and learning materials.
- Reviews of reasonable adjustments and individual support.

Where patterns or inequalities are identified, appropriate action will be taken.

Training

Staff will receive appropriate training and guidance relating to:

- Equality and diversity.
- Preventing discrimination.
- Inclusive practice.
- SEND and reasonable adjustments.
- Safeguarding.
- Bullying and harassment.
- Appropriate professional language and behaviour.

Training will be refreshed where necessary and in response to identified needs.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information relating to young people and staff will be handled appropriately and in accordance with relevant data protection and safeguarding requirements.

Confidentiality will be maintained wherever possible; however, information may need to be shared where there is a safeguarding concern or where there is a legal or professional requirement to do so.

Complaints

Any young people, parent, carer, member of staff or visitor who believes they have experienced discrimination should raise the matter with the appropriate member of staff.

Complaints will be managed in accordance with the provision's Complaints Policy. No individual will be victimised for raising a genuine concern.

Review of Admissions Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, commissioning arrangements or the operation of Routes Learning.