



**Willow Learning Trust  
Equality Policy**

This Willow Learning Trust Strategic Policy applies to the Willow Learning Trust as a whole and to all the schools in the Trust. The Willow Learning Trust, including all the schools and services within the Trust, their Trustees, governors and staff, must abide by this WLT Equalities Policy.

The Willow Learning Trust believes that the promotion of equality of opportunity is in the best interests of our staff, students and the wider community, and that all forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was intention to discriminate or not.

It is the responsibility of the local governing body and Headteacher of each school, and the Board of Trustees, to ensure that their school and its staff adhere to this WLT Equality Policy. In implementing the policy and associated procedures, the local governing body, Headteacher and Trust staff must take account of any advice given to them by the WLT CEO and/or Board of Trustees.

If there is any question or doubt about the interpretation or implementation of this Policy, the WLT CEO should be consulted.

**1. Our commitment**

The Willow Learning Trust is committed to equal opportunity and values diversity. We will challenge prejudice and intolerance and seek to eliminate discrimination.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is in the best interests of our staff, students and the wider community, and is also in the best interest of the Trust, so that we recruit and develop the best people for our jobs and benefit from the diversity it brings.

The Willow Learning Trust recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination. Discrimination is acting unfairly against a group or individual and can be direct or indirect. All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

We are aware of and comply with the 2010 Equalities Act and our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty and recognise that they support good decision-making.

In accordance with the Equalities Act and Equality Duty, the Willow Learning Trust will strive to ensure that it considers the needs of all individuals and avoids discrimination in shaping our policies, delivering our services and in relation to our employees.

By understanding the effect of our policies and actions on different people and how inclusive services can give everyone opportunities, we are able to ensure our services are efficient and effective.

The Willow Learning Trust aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that enables and encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

## 2. Legal duties

The Equality Act 2010 combined nine separate pieces of legislation into one single Act to help tackle discrimination and inequality. The Act introduced 9 protected characteristics:

- Age (in relation to staff only)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Maternity and pregnancy

The Public Sector Equality Duty has three aims. It requires the Trust as a public body to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In complying with the Duty, it may be appropriate to treat some people differently from others, for example providing a particular service in a way that meets the specific needs of people who share a protected characteristic.

The needs of disabled people must be taken into account in terms of employment and service delivery, and it may be appropriate to make reasonable adjustments or treat disabled people differently from non-disabled people.

## 3. Actions to be carried out

In developing policies and practices, every possible step should be taken to ensure that individuals are treated fairly in all aspects of their employment by, or receipt of services from, the Trust and its schools. Measures that will be taken include:

- a. for students - implementation of policies on equal opportunities (including special needs, behaviour and anti-bullying);
- b. for staff - implementation of policies on equal opportunities, recruitment and selection, pay and anti-harassment policy;
- c. PSHE, RS and other elements within the curriculum that promote tolerance and understanding about cultures and lifestyles;
- d. employing specialist staff to support students with special needs or disabilities, and implementing the Trust disability access plan;

- e. monitoring of welfare, with intervention and support where required;
- f. taking steps to meet the particular needs of students or staff that have a particular characteristic.

Specific objectives will be set and monitored to help the Trust and its schools to meet its duties and the aims of this policy.

Incidents involving discrimination and prejudice will be tackled immediately in line with this and other Trust and school policies; legal support may be sought if appropriate.

Data related to the protected characteristics will be collected and analysed to monitor compliance with the Equality Duties which will be done in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. This will include information on admissions, attendance, attainment, exclusions and prejudice-related incidents. Published information will not identify any individual.

All employees of the Trust have a duty to co-operate with the Trust to ensure that this policy is effective. We also expect students and parents and other visitors to the school to act in accordance with this policy. The Trust and its schools will promote this policy and ask anyone to report instances of suspected discriminatory behaviour so that they can be dealt with.

#### **4. Supporting Neurodivergent Colleagues**

The Trust is committed to fostering a working environment where open and respectful conversations about neurodivergence are welcomed. All staff are expected to be respectful of differences and inclusive of diversity in styles of learning, communicating and processing information.

To support colleagues who may be neurodivergent, we encourage staff to tell either their Line Manager, Headteacher, or HR. These discussions will be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality unless it is agreed that we can share this information with colleagues.

The Trust will comply with its obligations to consider reasonable adjustments to support neurodivergent colleagues. It is recognised that individuals may have differing needs, even where diagnoses are the same or similar. A meeting will be arranged to explore specific adjustments in detail.

Whilst the Trust aims to accommodate adjustments that are reasonable and workable, it is important for employees to understand that proposed adjustments must consider a range of factors to ensure the efficient delivery of education to our pupils and compliance with our legal obligations including under Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). When considering proposed reasonable adjustments, the Headteacher will consider:

- The individual employee's needs
- The operational requirements of the school
- The impact on pupils and colleagues
- The Trust's legal obligations, including those under KCISE

If, as part of our discussions, we consider a particular proposed adjustment would not be reasonable, the rationale for our decision will be clearly explained, and where possible, an alternative solution will be offered in discussion with you.

Disclosure of neurodiversity will not result in less favourable treatment.

The Trust will not tolerate discrimination, bullying, harassment, or victimisation of any kind due to neurodivergence, whether inside or outside the workplace including on work-related trips or events, including social events. Any discrimination, bullying, harassment, victimisation or other misconduct including in connection with neurodivergence will be treated as a disciplinary matter in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure which may result in disciplinary action being taken against the perpetrator. Serious cases of deliberate misconduct because of neurodivergence may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

The Trust will not pay for private assessments in this regard.

#### **5. Responsibilities of the Trust:**

Regulations require the Trust to:

- Publish at least once per year, information to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Duty, relating to both its employees and those affected by its activities.
- Prepare and publish at least once every 4 years, one or more objectives that it thinks it should achieve to meet the requirements of the Equalities Act.
- The CEO and Board of Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the Trust as a whole complies with the Equalities Act and fulfils the duties of the Equality Duty.

#### **6. Responsibilities of schools in the Trust**

Each school in the Trust is required to follow and work within this Equality Policy.

The local governing body and headteacher of schools in the Trust are responsible for ensuring that their school complies with the Equalities Act and fulfils the duties of the Equality Duty.

Each school in the Trust will prepare and publish an accessibility plan that will aim to meet the needs of disabled students by increasing the extent to which they can participate in the curriculum; improving the physical environment of; and improving the availability of accessible information.

Each school in the Trust must provide appropriate information as requested by the Trust and propose at least one objective to enable the Trust to fulfil its responsibilities in section 5.

**This Policy is the responsibility of the WLT CEO.**

**This Policy was agreed: November 2025**

**This Policy is due for review: November 2027**