

Equality and Diversity Policy

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April 2024

Next Review: April 2025

Policy Statement

1.1 WE Bridge Academy is committed to providing a learning, working and social environment that promotes equality of opportunity for all members of staff and students (existing and prospective).

1.2 WE Bridge Academy values diversity and recognises that the Institute is greatly enhanced by the disparate range of backgrounds, experiences, views, beliefs and cultures represented within its staff and students. The Academy embraces diversity in all of its activities and proudly acknowledges that variety and diversity are essential to the wellbeing and future development of the Academy.

1.3 It is the aim of WE Bridge Academy that individuals and groups within the institution are not only treated on an equal basis, but their diverse contributions to the academic, social and cultural life of the Institute are recognised and developed.

1.4 WE Bridge Academy will support and develop all members of staff and students by providing access to facilities, personal and career development opportunities, employment, and study on an equal basis. This commitment applies regardless of ethnic origin, national identity, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, maternity and pregnancy, marriage or civil partnership, religious belief, or socio-economic background.

1.5 WE Bridge Academy will make every effort to respect and accommodate students' gender identity with regard to, for example, choice of names and pronoun preferences. Students' use of single-sex facilities such as toilets will be governed by the relevant policies of the management of Southgate House, which stipulate that individuals who satisfy the requirements for gender recognition of the Gender Recognition Act (2004) will use the facilities which align with their acquired gender.

1.6 This policy builds upon the foundation of equality legislation and anti-discrimination guidance and strives not only to comply with legal requirements, but to use these to ensure that WE Bridge Academy endeavours to demonstrate best practice.

1.7 The Equality and Diversity policy underpins WE Bridge Academy's mission and is integral to the success of the organisation as a business and employer of choice.

Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to all students, to all applicants for posts with WE Bridge Academy, all employed staff, whether on a full time or part-time basis, permanent or temporary contracts, to agency staff and visitors undertaking duties in the name of WE Bridge Academy and to subcontractors undertaking work on the Academy's site.

The achievement of this Policy will require commitment and co-operation from students and employees and all other workers at all levels, and it is the responsibility of all staff and students to abide by the Policy. Any breach of the Policy will not be tolerated by WE Bridge Academy and may result in appropriate disciplinary procedures.

This policy does not form part of employees' contracts of employment and the Company may amend it at any time in accordance with changes in legislation or codes of practice

Legal Background

Under the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to:

- Discriminate directly against anyone or treat anyone unfavorably based on a person's protected characteristics, such as race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, gender reassignment, maternity and pregnancy, or marriage and civil partnership.
- Discriminate indirectly against anyone with any protected characteristics above by applying a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular group of protected characteristics
- Discriminate against anyone who is perceived to have a protected characteristic or is associated with someone who does have a protected characteristic
- Subject someone to harassment on account of their protected characteristic
- Victimise someone because s/he has made, or intends to make, a complaint or allegation or has given or intends to give evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination
- Discriminate against someone in certain circumstances on account of their characteristic after the working relationship has ended.
- Discrimination arising from disability: It is unlawful to treat a person unfavorably because of something related to their disability, unless the treatment is necessary and can be objectively justified. Additionally, employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled applicants, employees, or other workers are not substantially disadvantaged.

Objectives

- To ensure that all potential students and employees are treated equally when applying to WE Bridge Academy regardless of any protected characteristics
- To ensure that all students and employees are given an equal opportunity to develop to their full potential while studying or working at WE Bridge Academy
- To ensure that all policies and procedures within WE Bridge Academy are fair and are implemented equitably
- To become an employer and institution of choice

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility of WE Bridge Academy:

In relation to staff, the policy and practice of WE Bridge Academy require that all staff are afforded equal opportunities within employment and that entry into employment with WE Bridge Academy and the career progression will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each post. In all cases, ability to perform the job is the primary consideration. Subject to statutory provisions, no applicant or member of staff will be treated less favourably than another because of his or her protected characteristic.

In relation to students, WE Bridge Academy aims to provide education of excellent quality at all levels for able students whatever their background. In pursuit of this aim, the Academy is committed to using its best endeavours to ensure that all of its activities are governed by principles of equality of opportunity and that all students are helped to achieve their full academic potential. This statement applies to recruitment and admissions, to the curriculum, teaching and assessment, to welfare and support services, and to staff development and training.

Responsibility of Management:

The MD has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and associated legislation and also for observing relevant Codes of Practice.

All Directors and managers are responsible for applying this policy and for ensuring that their staff adhere to its requirements, and that all employment-related policies, procedures and practices adhere to this policy.

Responsibility of Staff:

- Promoting equality and diversity and inclusion, avoiding unlawful discrimination, challenging any incidents of unlawful discrimination or racial, sexual or other stereotyping perpetrated by students or other staff
- Keeping up to date with equality law and participating in equal opportunities and diversity training to eliminate prejudice and extend good practice
- To implement the requirements of this policy

Responsibility of Students:

- Respecting others in their language and actions
- Abiding to WE Bridge Academy's Equality and Diversity policy at all times
- Actively encouraging non-discriminatory practices and reporting any incidences of behaviour that fail to comply with this Policy

Definitions

- **'Equality'** means ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally and not less favourably or subject to direct or indirect discrimination.
- **Diversity** can be defined as the wide range of differences, both visible and non-visible, that characterise people (such as nationality, race, gender, background or belief). Diversity' also means recognising and valuing these differences between people, above and beyond those characteristics defined by the law.
- **Discrimination** takes place when an individual or a group of people is treated less favourably than others directly or indirectly because of a protected characteristic, as defined in the Equality Act 2010.
- **Direct Discrimination** occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic that they either have, or are thought to have (*discrimination by perception*). Direct discrimination can also occur by way of *association*, which is when a person does not have a protected characteristic themselves but is treated less favourably because, for example, they are associated with a relative that does have a protected characteristic.
- **Indirect Discrimination** occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to everyone, but has a disproportionately adverse effect on a particular group of people who share a particular protected characteristic e.g. women. A person with the protected characteristic who is disadvantaged in that way has the right to complain. To be justified the provision, criterion, or practice must be necessary for legitimate business reasons in circumstances where less discriminatory alternatives are not reasonably available.
- **Inclusion** means fully accepting everyone's right to feel like they belong in our organisation, and providing the support to enable everyone to have opportunities to be included in its activities.
- **Bullying** can be defined as persistent actions, criticism or personal abuse, either in public or private, which humiliates, denigrates, undermines, intimidates or injures the recipient
- **Harassment** is unwanted conduct which may create the effect (intentionally or unintentionally) of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment which interferes with an individual's learning, working or social environment or induces stress, anxiety, fear or sickness on the part of the harassed person
- **Victimisation** is punishing or treating an individual unfairly because they have made a complaint under this policy or taken legal action, or believes to have made a complaint, or to have supported someone who has made a complaint. It is unlawful, as is post-employment victimisation,
- **Discrimination arising from disability** - In addition to the above, it is unlawful to treat a person unfavorably because of something that results from their disability, unless the treatment is necessary and can be objectively justified. Furthermore, employers have

a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled applicants, employees, or other workers are not substantially disadvantaged.

Creating equality and diversity in the workplace

There are a number of ways in which the Academy aims to apply the principles of equality and diversity in the workplace, as follows:

Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection decisions will be free from bias or discrimination. Recruitment procedures will be conducted objectively and will be based upon specific and reasonable job-related criteria. Decisions regarding an individual's suitability for a particular role will be based on aptitude and ability.

We will make appropriate reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process to ensure disabled job applicants are not substantially disadvantaged. When invited to an interview, whether in person at our premises or online, all applicants will be asked if they require any adjustments to fully participate.

Wherever possible, vacancies will be advertised as widely as possible and as being suitable for flexible working, in order to encourage suitable applications from individuals seeking work on a flexible, part time or job share basis. Research has shown that being open to flexible working can increase an employer's attractiveness to female job seekers by up to 30%.

Career development and training

All staff will be given an appropriate induction to enable them to fulfil the responsibilities of their role.

All employees will be encouraged to develop their full potential and we will endeavour to accommodate individual needs when arranging learning events, so that staff are not unreasonably denied access to training or other career development or learning opportunities. Examples of this include being flexible on the timing and duration of events to enable people working flexible hours to attend, and selecting event premises that do not have physical barriers that might make access and attendance difficult, such as access via steps. These will be identified as part of an ongoing performance management process and will be determined objectively, taking into account the needs of the business and available resources.

Vacancies will be advertised internally and selection for promotion will be based on transparent processes and objective criteria, and decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

Terms and conditions

Our terms and conditions of service will be applied fairly and benefits and facilities will be made available to all staff who should have access to them, as appropriate.

The Academy operates a pay and benefits system that is transparent, based on objective

criteria and free from bias to ensure that all employees are rewarded fairly for their contribution. This includes those who may be on statutory leave such as maternity, paternity etc, at the time that such decisions are made.

Terms and conditions of employment for part-time employees will be provided on a pro-rata basis to full-time employees. Similarly, the terms and conditions for fixed term employees will be comparable with those given to permanent employees, except when different treatment can be objectively justified.

Employment policies and practices

The Academy aims to ensure that employment policies and practices, including any rules or requirements, do not directly or indirectly discriminate and are applied in a non-discriminatory manner. In particular we will ensure that all disciplinary decisions are fair and consistent and that any selection for redundancy is based on objective criteria.

The Academy will make reasonable adjustments to the working environment, arrangements, or workstations to alleviate or remove any substantial disadvantage faced by disabled staff.

We will aim as far as reasonably practicable to accommodate the requirements of different religions and cultures including dress code and time off for religious events.

We will consider requests from employees to vary or change their working pattern to enable them to balance their work and home lives, for example in order to care for a dependant. Such requests will be considered in accordance with the Academy's Flexible Working Policy.

Organisational communications processes will be undertaken in order that everyone is included and provided with access to the information they need to enable them to perform their roles within the organisation. This includes employees who work flexibly; those working remotely; those on family leave, such as maternity, paternity, adoption, parental and shared parental leave (see the Academy's Family Friendly policies); those employees with disabilities; and those whose first language is not English.

In trying to accommodate individuals' needs, where relevant the Academy will need to do so in accordance with its Health and Safety Policy and its legal duty of care to all employees.

Working environment

All individuals have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and the Academy takes reasonable steps to protect staff from discrimination, bullying or harassment and, in the event of a complaint, we will take appropriate action to prevent, as far as possible, a further occurrence.

We understand that some people find it hard to discuss their personal circumstances, and that disability can be invisible.

If you have a disability, or become disabled during your employment with us, you do not have to tell us. However, we would encourage you to let us know so that we can support

you, for example by making reasonable adjustments to our premises or to aspects of your role, or to our working practices.

If you are experiencing difficulties at work because of your disability, please contact your line manager or the Director to discuss potential reasonable adjustments that may alleviate or minimise such difficulties. We may need to discuss your needs with you and your medical adviser to help us get the right support in place.

All staff are encouraged to report any incidents of inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour at work or that occurs during the course of employment, on or off premises, including at work social events (whether organised by the Academy or not) or at formal or informal events involving staff, customers or other work-related contacts.

The Academy has a separate Anti Bullying & Harassment Policy and procedure for dealing with such complaints.

Equality & Diversity Monitoring

The Company will monitor the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives.